What is special about Cuba?

What is special about Cuba? On August 1960 Che Guevara gave a speech entitled *On Revolutionary Medicine* where he stated “The principle upon which the fight against disease should be based is the creation of a robust body; but not the creation of a robust body by the artistic work of a doctor upon a weak organism; rather, the creation of a robust body with the work of the whole collectivity, upon the entire social collectivity”. The question in this essay has manifold answers that I think is fundamentally rooted to the politics that catalyzed the revolution in Cuba. We cannot delve into the socialized health care of Cuba without considering the social-political advancement propagated by the Marxist Fidel Castro along with Che Guevara and their cohorts for I think they are what is special about Cuba. The economic ideology that Castro envisioned for his country was the sole determinant of the socialist reform that the contemporary Cubans are indulging, and this political history is something that is necessary to state so that we do not undermine its origin. Now, to concentrate the political analysis on the socialized health care that was truly advocated by Guevara which was explicit in his speech, he stated “Someday, therefore, medicine will have to convert itself into a science that serves to prevent disease and orients the public toward carrying out its medical duties. Medicine should only intervene in cases of extreme urgency, to perform surgery or some like it which lies outside the skills of the people of the new society we are creating.” His words, I believe, resonated in the ideal nationalism of the Cuban people’s case in just mere 73 years. The health care facilities became nationalized and the pharmaceutical companies became equally accessible to everyone. In 1959 post the revolution the country suffered from lack of doctors but within the span of just 11 years the population of medical doctors from 3,000 became 6,000 in 1970 and the TB infection was almost eradicated in the early 1970s. The centralization of health care services under the Ministry of Health Care and decentralizing up to the municipalities improved the localization of services especially to the rural areas and the further reform that was implemented in 1984 concentrating in preventive and curative approach by designating at least a dozen Family Doctors or General Practitioners in every municipalities to become the primary health care givers ensured a healthy and productive community. Along with these GPs, specialized medical consultants, sociologist, psychologist and other health care providers became the first aid of the community and they were not just to practice preventive and curative measures but also to educate and rehabilitate.

This radical expansion and success of the health care system of Cuba has a voluminous implication in its economy, along with good health the morale of its citizens has been boosted and introduction of education became fluid. Although I must clarify that the literacy program coincides the implementation of the socialized health care but I think it is obligatory to point out that education and health are interrelated. One cannot be educated if hunger prevails in her mind, therefore the alleviation of diseases propelled the community to be more participative in the economy.

References:
Guevara, Che. *On Revolutionary Medicine*, 1906