



University of Pittsburgh

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Department of Economics

March 17, 1993

4M38 Forbes Quadrangle
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
(412) 648-2828

The Selous Foundation's
Institute for U.S. Cuba Relations
325 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20003

Sirs:

I am in receipt of your Foundation's publication "Academic Espionage: U.S. Taxpayer Funding of a Pro-Castro Study" written by Antonio de la Cova. This document represents a clear case of libel, as it resorts to outright untruths and malicious innuendo to damage my reputation.

In the last three decades I have published a dozen books and more than 50 articles in academic journals, which have established my international prestige for objectivity. My systematic criticism of Cuban economic policies throughout all these years has also prompted numerous vicious attacks from Cuba and foreign sympathizers of its Revolution in many books and articles. It is obvious that Mr. de la Cova has not read any of my works and, if he has, not only is he totally irresponsible, but malicious as well.

Two segments in the document will suffice to prove a case of libel:

- On page 1, the beginning of the second paragraph, the document states: "...the report is expected to recommend resuming U.S. trade with Cuba while Castro remains in power...such an opinion would call for lifting the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba..." And on page 4, at the end of the fourth paragraph: "Such policy options would serve no useful purpose other than to accommodate socialist principles contrary to U.S. national interests." How can Mr. de la Cova know what we are going to recommend if we still haven't finished our work and our report is not due until May 1993? Furthermore, the thrust of our work, particularly in the economic section, focuses on Cuba in transition after Castro, not while he remains in power.

- On page 2 I am listed as a founder of and contributor to Areíto magazine. I neither founded Areíto nor served on its editorial board, nor wrote for it.

Equally reprehensive is Mr. de la Cova unwarranted reference to Professor Carlos Díaz-Alejandro's cause of death. He was a classical economist, an internationally known expert on Argentina (not Cuba), and a distinguished professor at Yale University. All these accusations become even more invalid in view of the fact that Mr. de la Cova has been convicted as a terrorist and has been in prison twice in the past.

I demand a public apology from your Foundation for the defamation contained in a document which is published and distributed on your letterhead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carmelo Mesa-Lago". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Carmelo Mesa-Lago
Distinguished Service Professor
of Economics and Latin American Studies

March 17, 1993

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Pittsburgh, PA 15260
(412) 648-2828

The Selous Foundation's
Institute for U.S. Cuba Relations
325 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20003

Señores:

He recibido la publicación de vuestra Fundación: "Espionaje Académico: Los Contribuyentes de Estados Unidos Financian un Estudio Pro-Castrista," escrita por el Sr. Antonio de la Cova. Este documento es un caso claro de libelo por cuanto utiliza falsedades e insinuaciones perversas para dañar mi reputación. En los últimos tres decenios he publicado una docena de libros y mas de 50 artículos en revistas académicas en todo el mundo, que han establecido mi prestigio internacional como un estudioso objetivo sobre Cuba. La acusación de pro-Castrista es aun mas absurda si se tiene en cuenta que, mi crítica sistemática de las políticas económicas del gobierno cubano en todos estos años, ha provocado ataques virulentos desde Cuba, así como de simpatizantes extranjeros de la Revolución, en varios libros y artículos. Es obvio que o bien el Sr. de la Cova no ha leído ninguna de mis publicaciones o, si lo ha hecho, sus acusaciones no sólo son irresponsibles sino además maliciosas.

Dos párrafos de dicho documento bastan para probar un caso de libelo:

En la primera página se dice: "el estudio de la FIU se espera que recomiende el restablecimiento de relaciones comerciales de los Estados Unidos con Cuba mientras Castro permanece en el poder...lo que implica el levantamiento del embargo económico contra Cuba..." y en la página siguiente se añade: "Estas recomendaciones no servirán otro propósito que los principios socialistas [de los autores] contrarios a los intereses de los EEUU." ¿Cómo puede el Sr. de la Cova saber lo que una docena de estudiosos vamos a recomendar si aún no hemos terminado nuestros trabajos y estos no se presentarán hasta finales de mayo de 1993? Mas aún, el grueso del trabajo del grupo económico de este proyecto se dedica a una transición después de Castro, no mientras él permanece en el poder.

En la segunda página se asegura que yo he sido un fundador y colaborador de la revista Areíto. Yo no fui fundador de esta publicación, nunca he sido miembro de su junta editorial, y no he escrito artículos para la misma.

Igualmente condenable es la alusión deleznable a la causa de la muerte del Profesor Carlos Díaz-Alejandro con el objetivo de enlodar su prestigio. El era un economista clásico, de fama internacional por su obra sobre Argentina (no Cuba) y un profesor distinguido de la Universidad de Yale. Todas estas acusaciones son aun mas inválidas si se tiene en cuenta que el Sr. de la Cova es un convicto terrorista que ha estado dos veces en prisión.

Demando una retractación pública de vuestra Fundación por el intento de difamación que se hace en un documento publicado y distribuido con vuestro membrete.

Sinceramente,



Carmelo Mesa-Lago
Catedrático de Servicio Distinguido
en Economía y Asuntos Latinoamericanos
Universidad de Pittsburgh

5 April 1993

Ralph Galliano
The Selous Foundation's
Institute for U.S. Cuba Relations
325 Pennsylvania Ave. S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20003

Dear Ralph,

I recently returned from a two-week trip to Central America and have just received your letter and the enclosed copy of Carmelo Mesa-Lago's letter to you dated March 17, 1993.

Mr. Mesa-Lago has been dealing with Castro's totalitarian Communist dictatorship for so long, that part of their twisted mentality and authoritarian concepts are reflected in his letter. He claims that my report published by the Selous Foundation, *Academic Espionage: U.S. Taxpayer Funding of a Pro-Castro Study*, "represents a clear case of libel, as it resorts to outright untruths and malicious innuendo" to allegedly damage his "reputation."

My paper indicates that Mr. Mesa-Lago is one of seventeen Cuba "specialists" participating in the "Cuba in Transition" project sponsored by Florida International University and headed by Lisandro Pérez. I mention in my study that most of these people "during the past 20 years have ardently advocated the reestablishment of diplomatic and economic relations with Castro's Cuba. Many of these scholars belong to organizations linked to the Cuban Directorate General of Intelligence (DGI) spy agency and its front group, the *Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP)*." Mesa-Lago does not raise an objection to this statement in his letter.

I further stated that Mesa-Lago was a member of the Institute for Cuban Studies (IEC), a participant in the Committee of 75 dialogue group, and that the "Cuba in Transition" project included "four founders and collaborators of *Areito* magazine: Jorge Domínguez, Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Lisandro Pérez, Marifeli Pérez-Stable." While he does not deny his affiliation with the IEC or the Committee of 75, Mesa-Lago claims in his letter to you that one segment of my report proving a case of libel is that:

"On page 2 I am listed as a founder of and contributor to *Areito* magazine. I neither founded *Areito* nor served on its editorial board, nor wrote for it."

Mesa-Lago has changed the word "collaborator" in my report to "contributor." I cannot tell if this is clumsiness or deviousness on his part. Nowhere in my paper does it state that Mesa-Lago wrote for *Areito* nor served in its editorial board. These concepts were invented by him, since I merely indicated that he was a collaborator. Mesa-Lago is apparently grasping at straws when he has illogically construed the two terms "founders" and "collaborators" into one. Of the four people mentioned affiliated with *Areito*, only Lisandro Pérez and Marifeli Pérez-Stable appear among the founders in the first issue of April 1974, while Jorge Domínguez and Mesa-Lago collaborated with the publication later on.

Enclosed are copies of two articles that appeared in *Areito*, directly linking Mesa-Lago to that publication. The first one, published in the Sept-Dec. 1975 issue, Vol. 2, No. 2-3, pages 58-64, translated as "Round Table on the Reestablishment of Relations Between Cuba and the United States," is credited to Mesa-Lago, Cole Blasier and José Moreno. The last paragraph of the introduction to this six-page article acknowledges in Spanish: "Areito thanks Dr. Mesa-Lago for his arrangements with Pitt Magazine that made possible that we reproduce the material here offered." This is obviously a clear case of collaboration between Mesa-Lago and *Areito*.

The second article I enclose, from Vol. III, No. 2-3 (1976), pages, 53-55, entitled "Regarding the Conference in Pittsburgh," was written by *Areito* founder and "Cuba in Transition" project member Marifeli Pérez-Stable. It lists Mesa-Lago as one of the panelists in the conference and the author goes on to claim "It is precise to particularly congratulate professor Carmelo Mesa-Lago" for inviting to the conference delegations from Cuba and the Soviet Union. Pérez-Stable summed up Mesa-Lago's conference as "a worthy testimonial of the success of the Cuban Revolution," and that conference participants signed a petition asking the U.S. Government to investigate "terrorist acts" perpetrated against Cuba by expatriates. Pérez-Stable went on to acknowledge that Cuban exile leaders labeled conference participants, including Mesa-Lago, as "academic marxists" and "useful idiot" intellectuals. Mesa-Lago did not respond publicly to those insults nor did he call for a public apology from anyone, in contrast to his present demand from the Selous Foundation. Since Mesa-Lago did not raise any objections to appearing in *Areito* back then, I do not understand why he now considers it a "case of libel" to be linked to the publication, especially when some people on the editorial board, like Lourdes Casal, were his close friends.

Mesa-Lago also considers my opinions of the conclusions of the "Cuba in Transition" report a "case of libel." This accusation is more proper of the totalitarian Cuban Communist society, which muzzles all dissenting opinion. Since the report is not due until May 1993, we will have to await its publication to ascertain if my evaluation was correct. Meanwhile, I stand by my opinions.

Mesa-Lago also erroneously assumes, "It is obvious that Mr. de la Cova has not read any of my works and, if he has, not only is he totally irresponsible, but malicious as well." In achieving a Master's degree in Latin American Studies, I had to read some of Mesa-Lago's books, which are part of my library of more than 600 books on Cuba. In his letter he admits that his writings have "prompted numerous vicious attacks," acknowledging he is a controversial figure, which is how I regard him. Yet, I do not recall that Mesa-Lago publicly demanded an apology from anyone else who disagreed with his erroneous concepts, as he now wants from the Selous Foundation for the publication of my paper.

Mesa-Lago's braggadocio of his "international prestige for objectivity" reeks of pompous megalomania. I will not detail here the numerous false predictions and crass errors I found in his writings, but will only refer to a few outrageous ones. In his 1971 edition of *Revolutionary Change in Cuba*, he claimed that "An anti-Castro movement originating within the socialist ranks would have greater probabilities of success." Twenty-two years later, we see Castro continuing

to crush all dissidence in the island, especially those within the socialist ranks, like Elizardo Sánchez and Gustavo Arcos. In 1978, Mesa-Lago wrongly predicted in *Cuba in the 1970s* that "There will be a continuation in the separation of government functions and the delegation of Castro's power" (page 156). Instead, Castro tightened his Stalinist grip on the country. In page 159, Mesa-Lago claimed, "The exportation of revolution to Latin America will come to a halt and peaceful coexistence will be gradually accepted by Cuba..." The same year that Mesa-Lago was promoting that false optimistic theory, Castro increased his military support for the Sandinista rebels, the Salvadoran guerrillas, and other Latin American marxist terrorist groups, according to the 1981 U.S. State Department Special Report No. 90, "Cuba's Renewed Support for Violence in Latin America."

Apparently, Mesa-Lago's long-studied Cuba theories are either gravely erroneous, or he is serving as a propagandist for the Castro dictatorship, as some Cuban exile leaders have claimed. This latter statement seems true when taking into consideration that in the 1975 *Areito* article Mesa-Lago advocated the lifting of the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba to "bring positive consequences in the political arena." Three years later, Mesa-Lago went to Havana as part of the Committee of 75 dialogue group, whose purpose was, as I stated in my paper, "to work toward the reestablishment of diplomatic and economic relations between the United States and Cuba." Mesa-Lago also did not refute this assertion.

Mesa-Lago reflects a castroite totalitarian and censorship mentality in his letter when stating, "Equally reprehensive is Mr. de la Cova (*sic*) unwarranted reference to Professor Carlos Díaz-Alejandro's cause of death." My paper points out that Díaz-Alejandro became a public controversial figure when he was appointed to the Kissinger Bipartisan Commission on Central America, and that the dispute ended eighteen months later when he died of AIDS. The fact that Díaz-Alejandro died of AIDS was published and broadcast in the Cuban exile newsmedia. Hundreds of cases of public figures contracting and dying of AIDS have been printed in the press for more than a decade. The most recent of these that received ample publicity were those of athletes "Magic" Johnson and Arthur Ashe. Mesa-Lago fails to explain why he finds my reference to Díaz-Alejandro's cause of death as "reprehensive" and "unwarranted," and calls it an "accusation."

Finally, Mesa-Lago purports that the paper I wrote for your foundation is "invalid in view of the fact that Mr. de la Cova has been convicted as a terrorist and has been in prison twice in the past." Needless to say, a number of international leaders have been convicted as "terrorists," from the right-wing Menachem Begin of Israel, to the Communist dictator Fidel Castro, and in accordance with Mesa-Lago's logic, their views would then be invalid. Obviously, Mesa-Lago has closely followed my anti-Castro activities to know that I was previously imprisoned twice. The first time was in 1976, when I was convicted of possession of explosives and a firearm in connection with the struggle against the Cuban tyranny. While I was on parole in 1985, Mesa-Lago's comrades from the Cuban dialogue and *Areito* magazine orchestrated a letter-writing campaign to the U.S. Parole Commission, claiming that I had violated my special parole condition that I could not participate in political activities nor write articles. I was briefly incarcerated while a parole hearing looked into these false accusations and a federal magistrate

ruled in my favor and granted my release. Although Mesa-Lago, his pro-Castro friends, and the Cuban regime still consider me a "terrorist," the United States government feels otherwise, and in 1992 granted me American citizenship.

I find it noteworthy that of all seventeen people involved in the "Cuba in Transition" project that I mentioned in my paper, only one, Mesa-Lago, has demanded a public apology for what he wrongly construed as "defamation." It is Mesa-Lago who owes an apology to the Cuban people for serving as a "useful idiot" to the Castro dictatorship for more than twenty years. In none of his works or articles that I have read is there a strong denunciation of human rights violations in Cuba, of abuses against political prisoners or a call for free and democratic elections with international supervision. When the Cuban tyranny crumbles, history will not absolve Castro nor Mesa-Lago.

Sincerely,

Antonio R. de la Cova