

The Selous Foundation's
Institute for U.S. Cuba Relations

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ACADEMIC ESPIONAGE:

U.S. Taxpayer Funding of a Pro-Castro Study

by

Antonio de la Cova

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INTRODUCTION

In the Summer of 1992, the U.S. Department of State approved a half-million dollar grant/contract to Florida International University (FIU) for a study on United States-Cuba relations.* The purpose of this academic study is to present foreign policy options to the U.S. government so it can reshape its policies on Cuba. Known as the "Cuba in Transition" study, it is headed by FIU professor Lisandro Pérez and a team of mostly Cuban-American scholars from FIU, other academic institutions, research centers, and consulting firms.

Among various policy options, the report is expected to recommend resuming U.S. trade with Cuba while Castro remains in power. In effect, such an option would call for lifting the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba at a time when Castro, following a significant cutback in Soviet/East Bloc trade, faces his most serious financial crisis since the 1959 revolution. Further, the recommendation of such a policy option would blatantly neglect to take into consideration the basic reason for imposing the 1962 economic embargo on Cuba in the first place: the massive seizure of U.S.-owned property without prompt, adequate, and effective compensation as required by international law. Lifting the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba would help Castro achieve his main policy goal: the unilateral normalization of United States-Cuba relations. A central objective of this plan, to split the Cuban-American community in its opposition to Castro, will have been accomplished by the issuance of the impending study. The "Cuba in Transition" final report is due out in June, 1993.

According to *The Miami Herald*, the "Cuba in Transition" study consists of 17 project members:

*Project director: Lisandro Pérez, director of the Cuban Research Institute, FIU;

*Project coordinator: Zeida C. Sardiñas, member of the Cuban Research Institute, FIU;

*Political section director: Jorge Domínguez, professor of government, Harvard University;

*Political section researchers:

Marifeli Pérez-Stable, professor of Latin American affairs, State University of New York;

Luis Salas, professor of criminal justice, FIU;

Damián Fernández, professor of international relations, FIU;

Rhoda Rabkin, professor of political science, Harvard University;

Roberto Cuellar, Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, San José, Costa Rica;

Anthony P. Maingot, professor of sociology, FIU;

Gillian Gunn, director of Cuba Project, Georgetown University;

*Economic section director: Sergio Díaz-Briquets, economist, Casals & Associates, Arlington, Virginia;

*Economic section researchers:

Jorge Pérez López, economist, U.S. Department of Labor;

Jorge Sanguinety, economist, Development Technologies, a management consulting firm in Washington, D.C.;

*The Foundation's request for additional information concerning the State Department's grant/contract (#571106900) to FIU was directed to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process. The Selous Foundation's Institute for U.S. Cuba Relations has formally made such request, which is expected to take at least several months.

Sergio Roca, professor of economics, Adelphi University, New York;
Archibald Ritter, professor of economics, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, [Canada];
Carmelo Mesa-Lago, professor of economics, University of Pittsburgh;
Rolando Castañeda, Inter-American Development Bank.

("U.S.-Cuba Study Splits FIU Faculty," *The Miami Herald*, Sunday, 11 October 1992, p. 1-B.)

FIU professor Lisandro Perez is assisted by 16 Cuba "specialists," most of whom 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 Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). These organizations are: *Areito* magazine, the Antonio Maceo Brigade (BAM), the Cuban-American Committee for Normalization of Relations with Cuba, the Committee of 75 dialogue group, the Cuban Culture Circle, and the Institute for Cuban Studies (IEC). Their links to Cuban intelligence were denounced by former DGI officials Florentino Azpillaga, Jesús Pérez Méndez, Manuel Espinosa and U.S. law enforcement officers.

BACKGROUND OF "CUBA IN TRANSITION" SCHOLARS

The "Cuba in Transition" project includes ten members of the IEC: Sergio Díaz-Briquets, Jorge Domínguez, Damián Fernández, Anthony P. Maingot, Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Jorge Pérez-López, Lisandro Pérez, Marifeli Pérez-Stable, Sergio Roca, and Jorge Sanguinety; four founders and collaborators of *Areito* magazine: Jorge Domínguez, Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Lisandro Pérez, Marifeli Pérez-Stable; three founding members of the Cuban-American Committee for the Normalization of Relations with Cuba: Jorge Domínguez, Marifeli Pérez-Stable, and Sergio Roca; and two participants in the Committee of 75 dialogue group: Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Marifeli Pérez-Stable, the latter also a leader and organizer of the BAM and the Cuban Culture Circle.

The IEC was established in 1969 by María Cristina Herrera, a sociology professor at Miami-Dade Community College-South, to promote academic exchanges with the Cuban regime. Five years later, Herrera and other IEC members founded the trimester *Areito* magazine, which boasts of its support for Castro's Cuban Revolution. In 1977, the BAM was created from the ranks of *Areito* and the IEC. Their purpose was to recruit young Cuban émigrés who would yearly travel to the island for 2 weeks and help the regime build housing projects. In 1978, members of *Areito*, the BAM, and the IEC, including Herrera, went to Havana as part of the Committee of 75 dialogue group and met with Fidel Castro and other government leaders. The purpose of the dialogue was to work toward the reestablishment of diplomatic and economic relations between the United States and Cuba. An offshoot of this venture was the Cuban-American Committee for the Normalization of Relations with Cuba.

In 1980, Committee of 75 leader, Reverend Manuel Espinosa, publicly denounced the dialogue, the BAM, the IEC, *Areito*, and the Cuban-American Committee as front organizations for DGI espionage and recruitment campaign in the United States. He accused Herrera of being a Cuban intelligence agent ("Cuba Used Dialogue as Spy Cover, Espinosa Says," *Miami Herald*, 1 February 1980, and "Espinosa Amplifies Accusations Against Some Persons," *Diario Las Américas*, 7 February 1980, p. 16). Two months later, Espinosa again accused Herrera of working for Cuban intelligence DGI Lieutenant Colonel Roberto Carbajal Acebal ("Manuel Espinosa," *Miami Radio*

Monitoring Service, WRHC and WOCN, Thursday, 13 March 1980, p. 8). Espinosa indicated that the ICAP, presided over by René Rodríguez-Cruz, was the DGI operation in charge of running the émigré organizations in the United States. Rodríguez-Cruz gained notoriety during the early days of the Cuban Revolution, photographed while directing Castro's firing squads and personally shooting in the head those executed ("They've Executed García Olayón," *Bohemia Magazine*, 11 January 1959, p. 54). Rodríguez-Cruz was one of four Cuban government officials charged on 5 November 1982 with conspiracy and drug trafficking into the United States by a federal court in south Florida (Case 82-643-CR-JE).

Earlier that year, on 4 March 1982, Florida Department of Law Enforcement Special Agent Sergio Piñón testified before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism, that the Committee of 75 was "a DGI operation," *Areito* magazine was "DGI propaganda," and that the BAM is "... specifically sponsored and headed by the Cuban DGI." Speaking before the same forum 8 days later, Latin Americanist and author Daniel James cited intelligence sources when stating that the Cuban-American Committee for Normalization of Relations with Cuba and the BAM were "... front groups organized by Cuban intelligence or persons cooperating with them." James also indicated that the ICAP was an agency of the DGI.

In spite of these revelations, on 19 July 1983 Cuban-American Carlos Díaz-Alejandro, a Yale University professor of economics, was appointed to the 12-member bipartisan Kissinger Commission on Central America. Díaz-Alejandro was on the advisory board of *Areito*, and was a member of the IEC, the Cuban American Committee for Normalization of Relations with Cuba, and the Committee of 75. His appointment to the Kissinger Commission drew loud opposition from the Cuban exile community and from then-Senator Paula Hawkins (R-FL). María Cristina Herrera, through the IEC, orchestrated an endorsement petition campaign on behalf of Díaz-Alejandro's appointment to the Kissinger Committee. The petition was signed by, among others, Jorge Domínguez, Anthony Maingot, Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Lisandro Pérez, and Sergio Roca, all of whom are now members of the "Cuba in Transition" project. Although Díaz-Alejandro was kept on the Kissinger Commission, the controversy ended 18 months later when the 47-year-old bachelor died of AIDS.

Also, in July of 1983, DGI Captain Jesús Pérez-Méndez defected to the United States and declared in a secret briefing to American counter-intelligence officers that *Areito* and the BAM were controlled by the DGI through its front group, the ICAP, and that Marifeli Pérez-Stable was a DGI agent who responded to Cuban intelligence officials Isidro Gómez and Jesús Arboleya Cervera. Pérez-Stable, who had organized another DGI front group called the Cuban Culture Circle, was receiving \$100 for every person that traveled to Cuba through that organization. According to Pérez-Méndez, Pérez-Stable replaced DGI agent Lourdes Casal after her death in Havana, and the DGI and ICAP prepared the yearly plans for Pérez-Stable.

Pérez-Stable, an ardent supporter of the Sandinista revolution, had travelled to Nicaragua in April 1980 to interview Commandant Two, Dora María Tellez, for *Areito* magazine. The following month, at the start of the infamous Mariel boatlift, Pérez-Stable and 14 Cuban émigré scholars sent a letter entitled, "Time to Normalize Relations with Cuba," to the editor of *The New York Times* (15 May 1980), advocating the normalization of relations with Cuba and claiming that "[t]he overwhelming majority of the Cuban people support the revolution ..."

In May 1984, Pérez-Stable led a group of 20 members of *Areito* and the Cuban Culture Circle during a one-week trip to Cuba as guests of the ICAP, where they met with Rodríguez-Cruz and other government leaders, participated in an homage at the grave of Casal, and gave press conferences denouncing the Cuban-American community for "abandoning their fatherland to sit on the lap of imperialism." In one press conference they spoke with pride of their work with *Areito*: "The pages of the magazine have been during these 10 years effusing the accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution" ("Tenth Anniversary of *Areito*," *Bohemia*, 8 June 1984, p. 63).

Three years later, in June 1987, DGI Major Florentino Azpillaga defected to the United States and repeated the espionage recruitment accusations against *Areito*, the BAM, and other pro-Castro, U.S.-based émigré groups. In a number of radio interviews in Miami, Azpillaga said that within the ICAP there are officers of Department 2 of the DGI, who are in contact with the BAM. A special DGI group, Department B-2, is in charge of recruiting espionage agents from among the BAM and other political and academic groups that visit Cuba.

Another Cuban defector, Roberto Lozano, a University of Havana researcher, added that the DGI used various academic exchange programs to recruit spies within American universities. Specifically, he cited the student exchange programs at the State University of New York (where Pérez-Stable teaches), at Johns Hopkins University, and at George Washington University ("Cuban Mission is Packed with Spies, Defector Says," *Miami Herald*, 23 September 1987, p. 12). In May 1991, another of these so-called academic "exchanges" was orchestrated by the Castro regime in Havana and included the participation of the IEC and some of its members, María Cristina Herrera, Lisandro Pérez, and Jorge Domínguez, among others.

CONCLUSION

The cornerstone of U.S. Cuba relations since the 1959 revolution remains the diplomatic, economic, and trade embargo against the Castro regime. Events leading up to the 1962 U.S. embargo against Cuba, particularly the massive seizure of U.S.-owned property without prompt, adequate, and effective compensation as required by international law, remain unresolved. The purpose of FIU's academic study, which is to present foreign policy options to the U.S. government so it can reshape its policies toward Cuba, is highly suspect, given the pro-Castro backgrounds of many of the Cuban-American scholars that make up the FIU study groups. Any policy options that recommend lifting the U.S. embargo against Cuba, given the *status quo*, only helps the Castro regime achieve its main policy goal: the unilateral normalization of United States-Cuba relations. Such policy options would serve no useful purpose other than to accommodate socialist principles contrary to U.S. national interests.

Despite the knowledge concerning the overt pro-Castro activities and DGI espionage links of many of these scholars, who advocate the reestablishment of diplomatic, economic, and trade relations with Cuba, the U.S. State Department proceeded with a half-million dollar grant/contract for the "Cuba in Transition" project at the expense of the U.S. taxpayer.

Antonio de la Cova is a policy analyst for the Selous Foundation's Institute for U.S. Cuba Relations and is the author of the forthcoming book, *U.S. Cuba Relations: The Reagan Years*, to be published by the Selous Foundation Press.



Cuban Research Institute

February 25, 1993

Ralph J. Galliano
Director
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Dear Mr. Galliano:

Since you indicate in your letter to me of February 19 that you are anticipating a response, I should advise you that following our conversation of last week, after a thorough reading of your report, and after consulting with other colleagues on this project, I have decided to refer this matter to the University Attorney. I have been advised that there may be grounds for legal action given the slanderous content of the document.

Consequently, I will not be communicating further with you on this matter, unless advised to do so by counsel.

Lisandro Pérez
Associate Professor and Director