

Havana's colonial center restored to old splendor

United Press International

HAVANA, Cuba — Fidel Castro's revolution may have wiped out many traces of Cuba's colonial past, but there is one part of that heritage it is anxious to preserve — the old city of Havana.

A 2-square-mile area in the center of Havana contains about 1,000 colonial era buildings that have been allowed to decay over the years. The task of restoring the area to its former brilliance has been taken on by Havana Mayor Oscar Fernandez Mell, a former physician, guerrilla commander and member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

Fernandez Mell and restoration experts and craftsmen have been working on the project for four years and already more than 30 buildings have been completed.

Among them is the 18th century palace of the captains-general beside Havana harbor. It was the seat of Cuba's government for much of its history, including the brief period of U.S. occupation at the turn of the century.

Current plans call for work on an additional 10 to 13 buildings a year through the end of the century until the entire area, declared a world historic landmark by UNESCO, is rescued from decay.

Fernandez Mell says the pro-

"All of the wealth of Cuba used to go into maintaining Havana's lavish lifestyle. Our priority has been to invest in rural development to ameliorate the great poverty that existed there. We have made great strides in bettering health and education ... but Cuba is a poor nation and still has to make hard choices." — Oscar Fernandez Mell, mayor of Havana

ject, despite its evocation of Cuba's colonial past, has not been opposed by his revolutionary colleagues.

"To the contrary, I wish everything I did was as uncontroversial as this project has been," he said.

Furt undertaken as a local initiative, the project now receives more than \$1 million a year in funding from the national government, Fernandez Mell said. He said additional funding is expected from the United Nations.

About 600 architects, restorers, psychologists and craftsmen led by historian Sergio Gonzalez work full-time on the project.

Shortly before Castro came to power in 1959, the former government of Fulgencio Batista planned to demolish the historic section of the city, then among

the most valuable real estate in the capital, to make way for more profitable structures, Fernandez Mell said.

One of the first proposals he considered when he became mayor eight years ago was to proceed with the projected demolition.

"Old Havana is what gives our city its singularity," he said. "I decided we would not destroy it."

In the end his colleagues agreed it was not necessary for a socialist state to destroy the previous culture's heritage or the artistic roots and preferences of the people.

While such a large-scale restoration does compete for scarce resources in a city that still experiences shortages, including a shortage of housing, the historical importance to the world makes

the investment a legitimate one, Fernandez Mell said.

The restoration is being undertaken block by block to ensure consistency of treatment. The completed buildings remain in public use as homes or shops, while at the same time serving as a living museum open to the public.

Those who continue to live in the district must agree to share in its upkeep. A committee, including psychologists, judges applicants for residence in the area.

The shops that remain are furnished in colonial style. Many of them are restaurants that serve traditional dishes. There are plans to close many of the streets to motorized traffic as a convenience to pedestrians.

One stately old three-story building that was once the home of a slave trader is about to be opened as a ceremonial reception center for the mayor.

A trip through the area puts the visitor in a time machine back to the 18th century. There are ground floor offices where business was conducted around arched double patios designed to get natural ventilation during Cuba's sweltering summers.

Spacious living quarters are on the second floor, and the apartments originally housing slaves are on the third floor with ceil-

ings so low their inhabitants could never walk upright.

Even the room oreeman has been restored, complete a niche for Cuban-style witchcraft.

The renovated district is expected to contribute to a revival of tourism that already is under way, Fernandez Mell said.

Nearly 200,000 tourists visited Cuba last year, up from a low of 3,000 in 1968, he said.

The freshness and brightness of the restored area contrast sharply with the general shabbiness of the rest of once beautiful

Havana, but that does not trouble the mayor.

"All of the wealth of Cuba used to go into maintaining Havana's lavish lifestyle," Fernandez Mell said. "Our priority has been to invest in rural development to ameliorate the great poverty that existed there."

"We have made great strides in bettering health and education, where we have achieved standards existing only among developed countries. But Cuba is a

poor nation and still has to make hard choices."

He said it often was difficult to find artisans who could master the old building techniques in order to restore the buildings colonial style.

The most difficult to find was a traditional stone mason. Only one was left on all of Cuba. He was lured out of retirement and has now passed on his skills to a new generation.

Merger won't cause 'domino effect', Texaco chief says

United Press International

TULSA, Okla. — Fears that a merger of Texaco Inc. and Getty Oil Co. would trigger a domino effect of big oil companies taking over smaller ones were emotional and unfounded, Texaco U.S.A.'s president said Thursday.

James W. Kinnear, also vice chairman of Texaco Inc., was the first witness for Texaco in its defense of a lawsuit filed by Pennzoil Co. seeking to halt the \$10.1 billion Texaco-Getty merger. Pennzoil itself wanted to merge with Getty.

"There's a degree of emotionalism (in Getty's allegations)," Kinnear said. "Decisions of this type are not made on an emotional basis. They are made on fact."

"Texaco did not bounce down and make an unfriendly tender offer. Pennzoil itself made an offer. Texaco looked at it and made a friendly offer. We were successful."

Pennzoil of Houston has asked U.S. District Judge James O. Ellison to issue a temporary injunction halting the Texaco-Getty merger as a violation of antitrust laws. Pennzoil also has filed a breach of contract lawsuit in Delaware contending Getty promised to sell stock to Pennzoil, then reneged in favor of Texaco.

In contrast to testimony from Pennzoil witnesses, Kinnear told Ellison the Getty acquisition would not change Texaco's policy of bidding with partners on high-risk offshore leases.

Pennzoil alleges with the acquisition Texaco would be big enough to go it alone on the ventures, cutting out a partner with

which Pennzoil and other smaller companies could bid.

Texaco's policy has been and will continue to be to spread the risk, Kinnear said.

"You don't put the mortgage to the ranch on one opportunity," he said. "We tried going it alone 20 years ago and it didn't work out. We learned from that."

Pennzoil has expressed fear a Texaco-Getty merger would prompt a decline in oil and gas exploration because it would be less expensive for Texaco and others to acquire reserves, such as those of Getty, than for them to find new oil and gas.

"The amount of exploration of the two companies together will clearly be no less than what the two companies would do separately," Kinnear said.

"With the production of Getty's reserves comes the obligation to explore. To stay in business, an oil company must try each year to replace the reserves produced that year."

Kinnear also dismissed Pennzoil's allegations that the acquisition would lessen already lagging competition in all areas of the oil industry. Listing each area from marketing to production, Kinnear said the industry was highly competitive.

Under cross-examination by Pennzoil attorney Bill Burke, Kinnear said he was not aware of any industry or analysts' speculation that Texaco was attempting the Getty merger because enforcement of antitrust laws appeared slack during the Reagan administration.

"We do not speculate on attitude," he said. "We review the law."

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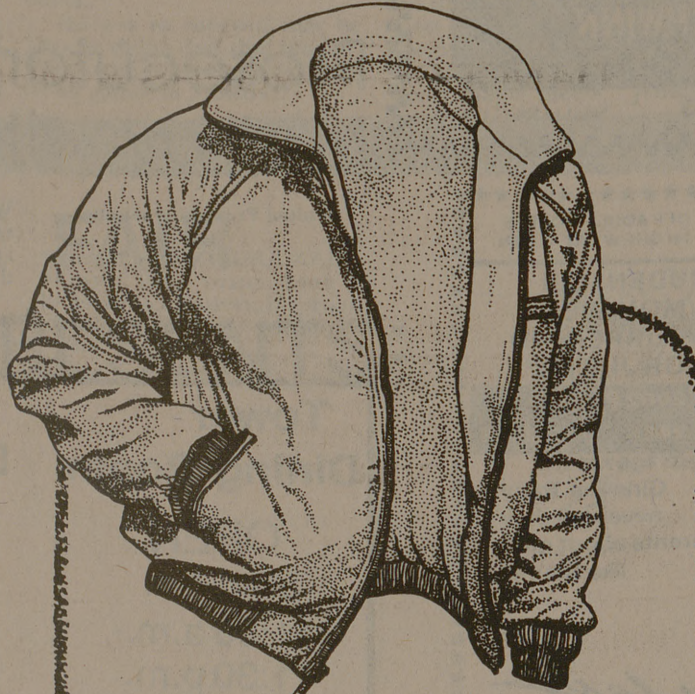
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