

THE FREE ENTERPRISE IN FUNCTION OF HISTORIC AND PATRIMONIAL PRESERVATION: THE PROJECT “PARADORES DE CUBA”

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Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today and what we pass on to future generations. What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application.

Cuba has the most impressive preserved example of Spanish military architecture. In the cities of Havana, Trinidad, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba, we can find an interesting mixture of Baroque and Neoclassical monuments and a homogeneous ensemble of private houses with arcades, balconies, wrought-iron gates and inner courtyards, in a proportion not found in any other country of the Western Hemisphere.

The subject of this presentation is extensive, so I want to mention basic realities for your consideration. We face in Cuba very large challenges, not only social but economic, on top of the serious political anarchy that will develop during the change into a Republic and it evolves into a real democracy.

We have had almost fifty years of communism, with a very weak civil society and very few solid institutions, with the exception of the military, the Church and the preservation groups.

I have followed the preservation effort, probably one of the most promising, considering the lack of private resources. In the absence of private resources, the political approach driven by the government, in each renovation and restoration project, has made things more difficult.

Making these projects a reality is not only necessary to create sources of economic activity, but also to increase the awareness of the Cuban people about saving

their architectural heritage, including their historical monuments and buildings. And protecting this patrimony from the invasion of foreign investors will not make this task any easier.

A private corporation, working in coordination with the professional structure of preservation, can work miracles in the future of Cuba. We all know that without private property and free enterprise, there is no future for the Cuban Nation.

This corporation will help to pave the road for those goals and, at the same time, will promote education for future generations, ancillary industries, and job opportunities for the Cuban people, as well as a real cultural tourism that will develop gradually and bring self-respect to the Nation and earn also the respect of the free nations of the world. Great challenges lie ahead and, acting jointly, we will meet them.

PROPOSAL FOR THE LEGAL STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL PARADORES DE CUBA

The legal structure of the National Paradores will depend on the government in Cuba after communism.

Fundamentally, the proposal would involve the creation of an independent entity, associated with the Department of Tourism, devoted to the development, operation and administration of the National Paradores in Cuba. Fee title to the properties themselves shall be held by the government of Cuba.

The model of the paradores in Spain offers an example of an existing legal structure.

The *paradores* along the island will be located in castles, plantations or *haciendas*, and fortresses in existence today, and also in old convents and facilities in sugar mills, thus preserving their original characteristics, but expanding them if necessary, without being an exact replica of the original.

Most of the *paradores* would be used to promote historical places, natural landscapes or ecological sites, which usually are not of interest to commercial hotel chains that do not have the cultural values in mind.

According to the size of the buildings, alternatives could be considered, such as using them as centers of tourist information, restaurants, smaller hotels or a combination of all of these. The process to design a building for a future *parador* could be implemented by a functional Institute for Historic Preservation, as determined by the Patrimonial Section of the Ministry of Tourism or a National Trust, like in the United States and England, which are usually the ones that study the buildings and recommend them to be approved for inclusion in the National Patrimony.

LEGAL STRUCTURE OF PARADORES IN SPAIN

On February 12, 1988, an entity was created by the Spanish Government: a National Institution for the Promotion of Tourism, known as “Instituto de Turismo de España,” which maintains its character as an autonomous and independent organization, affiliated with the Ministry of Transportation, Tourism and Communications. This institution develops the marketing agenda and promotes tourism in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The entity has a President and an Advisory Counsel, both of whom hold the power to administer the *paradores* and to execute contracts related to such properties.

The management of the Spanish *Paradores*, until 1990, was the responsibility of the Tourism Administration of Spain. By legislative acts, enacted on September 23, 1988 and June 29, 1990, a completely independent legal entity was established with the name of “*Paradores de Turismo de España*.” This entity holds the possession, right to use, operation and administration of the *Paradores*, and it coordinates their interaction with the tourism industry. The Transportation Ministry appoints the President of the *Paradores*, and

the governing statutes provide for a number of directors. Initially the entity was established with ten directors; as of today, there are thirteen. Of the ten original directors, six were named by the Ministry of Transportation and Tourism, and the remaining four by the Economics Ministry. The directors’ term of office was set at four years.

The owners of the independent corporation, who share in the profit generated by the entity, are its shareholders. The initial capitalization of the entity was 15,889,250,000 *pesetas*, in the form of 63,557 shares at 250,000 *pesetas* each. Every shareholder in equity has the following rights:

1. Participation in the division of profits and in the division of company assets (exclusive of fees) upon liquidation;
2. Option rights upon the offering of new shares;
3. Voting rights at general meetings and as to decisions related to the entity;
4. Rights to information regarding the entity.

The stock is legally transferable and the capitalization of the entity can be increased or diminished as necessary. The administration of the entity is generally governed by the General Assembly of Shareholders and Directors.

ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURE TO CONSIDER IN CUBA

As an alternative to the Spanish example, the National *Paradores de Cuba* could be administered by a non-profit corporation. Instead of distributing profits to shareholders, the profits would be maintained within the entity for restoration, maintenance and administration of the *paradores*. Additionally, certain percentages of the profits would be earmarked for establishing a fund to finance future restoration projects. Monumental projects could be implemented through the sale of bonds. The obligations of the bonds would be to accrue interest at a sum equal to that offered in the general market.

Gains beyond those necessary for the purposes of the non-profit entity could inure to the government and be earmarked for specific government projects, which would be targeted to the arts or education. This structure would benefit greatly the people of Cuba and

would also be the most viable method for preserving and upkeeping the *paradores*.

THE HISTORY OF THE SPANISH PARADORES

Since the Middle Ages the *parador* has served as a hostelry for Spaniards to spend the night as they traveled throughout their country. Based on this tradition, when the Marquis of Vega Inclán was Commissioner of Tourism in 1926, the concept of building a series of state-owned *paradores* arose and was approved by King Alfonso XIII. The first *parador* was built in the *Sierra de Gredos* and was primarily for hunters. As the idea of tourism and travel took hold, more hostelries were built in Bailén, Oropesa and Mérida.

At the beginning, the predominant idea was to encourage tourists to visit places which until then private enterprise had not considered profitable. The idea of using ancient monuments, old hospices, castles and convents to install the new *paradores* always prevailed. This made them more attractive to tourists because of their historical value, at the same time enhancing national pride as a competitive factor against foreign hotel corporations. Basically, a journey thorough the Spanish land and its *paradores* was a journey through history.

The development of the *paradores* was paralyzed during the political crisis and the downfall of the monarchy. By the end of the Civil War in 1939, most of the National Heritage and the *paradores* had been destroyed. During the national reconstruction process pursued by Franco's regime after the war, the need arose to create new tourist attractions to counteract the terrible situation of a country in ruins, to say nothing of the isolation imposed on Spain by the Western countries, due to the unfair identification of Spain with fascism in spite of its neutrality during World War II.

The *paradores* began to appear simultaneously with the national reconstruction and economic growth of Spain, and parallel to the growth of the tourist industry. This planning of the national unity by the Spanish people and the feeling of pride in their Spanish heritage—added to their selflessness and the sacrifices they had made during their most difficult times—accomplished one of the most successful economic miracles of the 20th Century. This miracle was followed by another important one when they overcame the en-

suating political crisis and changed abruptly from a dictatorship to democracy.

We are the descendants of that indomitable Hispanic race, with its individualism so characteristic, but the long process of 50 years has created in most of us an inner strength that can achieve miracles in the process of building the Third Republic, to eliminate once and for all the lack of freedom and democracy in Cuba

In Spain today there are 86 *paradores* all over the country that are an inspiration to create something similar in ours.

PROTOTYPE OF A CUBAN PARADOR—LOS JAZMINES, VIÑALES, PINAR DEL RÍO

We offer now an example of a potential Cuban *parador* that fits in with those general specifications. I am talking about Los Jazmines Hotel, a true prototype of this kind of construction, on account of its location, as well as the beauty and the weather of the area.

Built in the late 1950s, it is located at the 25th Kilometer on the highway that leads to the Viñales Valley, half way between the city of Pinar del Río, the provincial capital, and the Northern coast, towering above a majestic view. The Viñales Valley, a beautiful environment where this *parador* is located, was described by the late Leví Marrero as “a submerged garden, above which the Northern sierras raise up, while others, even higher, covered by a shining green and white flora, reach far beyond.” In the Valley itself, the *mogotes*, intensely green, are unique geological formations not seen elsewhere. These *mogotes* are the consequence of telluric movements that changed a huge cavern into what it is today: a fertile valley with these peculiar formations, on top of which marine fossils give faithful evidence showing that this region was submerged under the sea in previous millennia.

Los Jazmines Hotel has more than 30 guest rooms in its three floors, with cabins scattered around, which would allow accommodation of a large number of guests. From the rooms, the terraces and the swimming pool, visitors enjoy the whole splendor of the Valley. From the dining-room, furnished with *tabourets* and other typical pieces of Cuban furniture (produced by Casa Pi), the guests can see how, with the changes of light, the *mogotes* seem to move across the impressive landscape.

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