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BRAZIL

The Land of the Future

AS SEEN THROUGH SWISS EYES

By HEDY BLESSLEY

Everybody knows about Brazil's natural beauty, but few have heard about the famous sculptor, Aleijadinho, the foremost modern painter, Portinari, the poet and composer, Carlos Gomes, and the musician, Villa Lobos; it is about them I shall tell you.

My two brothers have been in Brazil for over thirty years, so I could not have wished for better guides to show me the Brazilian gems. Longing to brush up my Italian, I went in August 1958 with the Italmar from Genoa to Rio de Janeiro. The "Biancamano", a 23,300-ton ship, stopped at Barcelona, Lisbon and Dakar. Everywhere there have been guided tours, but Dakar was the most unusual and amusing one. The two weeks from Genoa to Rio went like a flash; how I enjoyed the daily concerts, watching the dividing sea behind the ship, and occasionally the caprice of the dolphins! Fortunately, I shared a cabin with an Italian actress who, besides speaking a classic Italian, had crossed the Atlantic many times. I enjoyed a swim before breakfast, as later in the day the pool was packed like a tin of sardines. My deepest and most unforgettable impressions were the daily sunset and especially the sunrise. Around 5 a.m. the crew scrubbed the deck — before sunrise. I put my head out of the port-hole. There appeared to be fire in the sea, and then all the colours of the rainbow formed a wonderful picture in the dark. I watched this miraculous sunrise day after day; as we approached the tropics the more grandiose became the spectacle. This alone would have been worth the journey. The sky at night was ever so wonderful — cool nights under the constellation of the Southern Cross.

Brazil is so enormous and diverse that often her own people wonder as they travel from marvel to marvel. They speak Portuguese. Of whatever origin, men of all colours and religions think, feel, and act with a perfect identity of unity and goals.

In 1500 the Portuguese Armada discovered Brazil; because it appeared to be the mouth of a river, the first expedition named it Rio de Janeiro (January River) on 1st January 1501. A Jesuit Mission, established in 1553, grew and developed into the City of Sao Paulo. In 1808 the Portuguese, Dom Joao VI, arrived in Rio de Janeiro; later he was crowned Emperor of Brazil and Portugal. Dom Pedro I proclaimed the independence of Brazil in 1822, and in 1889 the Republic was born. Treasures and gems through the historic milestones have been preserved and are a tremendous contrast of modern Art.

I was lucky enough to arrive in Rio de Janeiro at the same time as the Italian President — Giovanni Gronchi — on his State Visit, and so I, too, was welcomed with band and dancers! Rio is the most beautiful harbour on earth. The first glimpse of the "Cità Merveglia" took my breath away in sheer wonder. To see my brother straight away amongst thousands of people was a miracle! Surprise and wonder followed; I could scarcely sleep the first week. To be a guest in one of the best hotels in Copacabana now seems like a dream, and only photographs prove that I have been on the Sugar Loaf Mountain,

on the Peak of Corcovado under the gigantic Christus Figure, and in the lovely Island Paqueta, which is exceptionally picturesque. My brother, a specialist in horticulture, took me to the Botanical Gardens; they have the most complete collections of tropical flora in South America, about 1,000 specimens. The avenue of "Imperial Palms", 2,200 feet long, is famous; some palms are 118 feet high and were planted by the Emperor Dom Joao VI in 1808. Besides being one of the most beautiful cities in the world, the hospitality and friendliness everywhere surpassed my expectations. Quinta da Boa Vista and Tijuca Forest came as heavenly surprises — each a Paradise! Quinta da Boa Vista was the former Imperial Park, still a wonderful setting for the ancient mansion that was the residence of three illustrious men — Prince Regent Dom Joao VI, and the Emperors Dom Pedro I and Dom Pedro II. Today the Royal Residence houses the National Museum. The Royal Park, with centuries-old trees, is a most pleasant retreat from the noisy city. Floresta da Tijuca is one of the prettiest spots in Rio de Janeiro. To see Rio from the Mesa Emperatore is to "See Naples and die"! Largo do Boticario is a charming little square in pure colonial style — a vivid memento of Rio in the time of the Emperor.

(To be continued.)

