

H.M.C.S. ST. CROIX



POOL
SWIMMIN'
MR I

WHAT AM I
DOIN' HERE?
THE LATEST WORD IN TADPOLES IS
POLLYWOG PAYNE!

RIO DE JANEIRO

The aim of this paper is to give the Ship's Company unfamiliar with the Latin American environment an outline of a number of subjects. Many of the statements will appear self-evident, however, a re-statement of the obvious will do no harm. I hope that I can impose some order on the chaos of my notes - but if not, at least I trust even its confusion will be of interest.

To begin, something of the Latin American outlook. Because of their cultural heritage, as well as because of the very structure of their language, (Portugese in Brazil, Spanish in Argentina, Uruguay) Latin American's in general are inclined to be much more formal and punctual in their dealings with foreigners and with one another, than is our custom among the English speaking nations.

The first misconception to be dispelled is that given by grade "C" Hollywood movies. The Latin-American is not a comic character, he is not a simpleton, he is not a dozing-in-the-sun type. He is a bit of a fatalist, he is sensitive, he is generally astute, he can be very energetic and efficient, although often there is a difference between his idea of "what is important" and our own idea.

As another generalization he tends to take life rather more seriously than we realize. Although the realities of the Cold War and the possibility of Hot War do not occupy his mind to any great extent, for the last 150 years or more South America has been faced with local wars, revolutions, inflation and general economic and political instability. Therefore, life can be real and very earnest.

Only in the past 20 years has there been much of a middle class. Even today, there are the "haves" and the "haves-nots", the difference being much more marked than we are accustomed to. A possible exception in Uruguay, which finds herself in severe economic straits because of the imposition of a Welfare State which proved to be beyond the nations resources. The gulf which separates the "haves" and the "have-nots" is the greatest single cause of economics - and therefore political - instability which has impeded the development of this potentially rich area.

Educational standards vary, but literacy is hardly a valid yardstick with which to measure political sophistication. The literacy rate in Argentina and Uruguay is comparable to Canada's; in Brazil and most of the others it is far lower.

Despite the foregoing, it must be borne in mind, that the Latin-American is a very proud individual. He does not enjoy being told that his is not the best way of doing things. If it is not, he would prefer to find out for himself. The point is, really, that Canada is highly respected and to a considerable degree envied in South America. We should do nothing to dispell this point of view by professing unsought opinions, bragging, lack of manners, tactlessness, or misconduct.

Local politics tend to be both changeable and obscure. If faced with a view on the subject - which some time or other one almost certainly will be, - the only thing to do is to show polite interest, and to venture no opinion.

Canada's non-involment in the Organization of American States is a bit of a sore point. Our "party-line" is also obscure, so it is probably safest to agree that the OAS is a good thing, and to state that Canada has the matter under active consideration. Our commitment to NATO is generally understood. The Commonwealth is often misunderstood, as a sort of neo-colonialist play. The political and economic advantages are not realized - not surprising, considering the number of apparently well educated Americans who are convinced that Canada is governed from and taxed by Great Britain.

You will find that Latin Americans drink less than most of us do. This does not lessen their capacity for enjoyment. It is well to drink the local product; and local wines and beers are cheap and excellent. It is prudent to steer clear of such high velocity products as Grappa and Aquarente. Taxes on imported wines and spirits make them very expensive. Local tourist guide books give a fairly reliable shopping guide, but with a bit of patience one can often acquire the same article in a less fashionable store for a considerably smaller amount. Imported goods are usually heavily taxed. Never buy "Jewels" from street vendors. They are invariably synthetics or glass. As in any other part of the world, good restaurants and expensive restaurants are not necessarily the same thing. Again local tourist guide books are fairly reliable. The standard rate of tipping is 15% for meals or taxis. Bills at restaurants are either "inclusive" or "encluido" meaning the tip is included in the total; or "exclusivo", which means that one is faced with a quick mathematical calculation.

Public transportation is usually cheap, if crowded. If at all possible, only metered taxis should be engaged; if not marked, a firm arrangement should be made with driver before proceeding on the journey. In some parts, taxi rates are double the meter fare after dark. This should be ascertained on arrival.

Frequently it will be found possible to exchange money of a more advantageous rate than is offered by the banks.

And a word to the wise. Never argue with a Latin American Policeman!

Brazil, or, to give it its proper title, the United States of Brazil, is the fifth largest country in the world and has the eighth largest population. Brazil was discovered for the Portuguese by Pedro Alvares Cabral in 1500. For the first few years Portugal, then much concerned with the East, paid little attention to Brazil. Settlers were attracted to the region less by the prospect of earning their living by persistent toil, than by opportunities of speculative profit. To do the work they impressed the native Indians. They inter-married freely with them and later, with the Negro Slaves imported from Africa. Brazil is a multiracial society.

Brazil remained a Portuguese colony until December 1821, when it became an independent state, and the only country in South America to possess a Monarchy. The Monarchy lasted until 1889, when the country became a Republic. The present pretender to the throne of Brazil now resides at Pehopolis.

The Constitution of the Republic of Brazil is similar to that of the United States of America, with an elected President, a House of Representatives and a Senate. Brazil, though independent, still maintains close association with Portugal and it is the only country in South America where the Portuguese language is spoken universally.

Brazil possess immense wealth potential, much of which is yet untapped. Chief amongst its assets is coffee, followed by raw cotton, wood, tobacco and mineral ores. Rio de Janeiro is no longer the Capital of Brazil. The Capital is now, situated inland at Brasilia.

Rio de Janeiro itself has a population of over three million. The city is situated on the southern coast in a setting of mountains and five beaches. Much of the land which forms part of the city has been reclaimed from the sea. The entry in Rio Harbour, whether by day or night, is a spectacle not to be forgotten. The largest vessel could enter the port at any state of the tide. But special precautions should be taken against thieves. Thievery is rife in Brazil and cases have occurred where females have swun to, and boarded, ships in harbour from the seaward side for the purpose of theft,.....and things!

Traffic in Rio is a very great problem, and a very great hazard. Small buses known as "lotacoes" provide a reasonably quick and cheap means of transport. The destination and route are painted on the wind shield. A frequent ferry service connects Rio with Niteror.

The currency is Cruzeiro. The rate of exchange fluctuates considerably. Notes are at present 5000, 1000, 500, 200, 100, 50, 10 and 1 in denominations. Different notes are easily confused and care is advised in checking each note before parting with it.

There are several gates to the Dockyard and liberty men may have difficulty in explaining to taxi drivers etc., to which one they wish to go. It is advisable to go ashore armed with the name of the Jetty and gate on a piece of paper.

The Brazilian Naval Base provides general facilities which include a basketball court, a very well equipped gym, swimming pool and running track for Petty Officer BJOLA. Matches with the Brazilian First Naval District can be arranged for most summer sports.

A few brief notes from Genial George on health hints for visit to Rio. Venereal disease is rife, and there is no control. Infection contracted there may not appear for as long as seven weeks after contact. Treatment has been found to be extremely difficult in some cases due to infection by drug-resistant bacteria. Disease carrying body lice are common in slum areas. Sleep out in such areas and you can expect to get infested.

The local water is not safe; remember Port of Spain. Many Brazilians do not drink the water until it has been filtered, boiled and chlorinated. Bottled water can be purchased, but until its source and purity are known, it may not be safe to drink. The same goes for ice for drinks, and ice cream. The only fruit that may be safely eaten raw are easily skinned bananas, oranges and pineapples.

Despite the attractive appearance, bathing on both the Copacabana and other beaches can be extremely dangerous because of the under tow. Several good swimmers are drowned each year and the Ship's Company are warned to obey the beach guards and their warning flags without question. Excursions to spear fishing grounds can be arranged for the day. There are fish in profusion around all rocks and head lands. There is virtually no risk from sharks.....of the fish variety.

The following sight seeing tours are recommended:

- (a) The Sugar Loaf. Reached by cable car which runs half hourly from 1000 to 2200 daily.
- (b) Corcovado. A 2300 foot peak surmounted by a huge figure of "Christ the Redeemer". Ascent is made by railway. Trains depart every hour from 0830.
- (c) Jardim Botânico. Contains over 6000 varieties of plants.
- (d) Quinta de Boa Vista. A public park containing a small Zoo and Museum.
- (e) The National Library. Avenida Rio Branco. Open 1000 to 2200 weekdays, 1100 to 1500 Sundays.
- (f) The National Museum of Fine Arts and the Museum of Retrospective Art are both situated in the Avenida Rio Branco.
- (g) Catete Palace. The President's official city residence on Rua de Catete. This is also an interesting shipping area and is one of the principal sights of Rio.

Rio is an ideal place to go on Bus Tours. The Brazilian Navy will be supplying a boat with a capacity for at least 600 persons for a boat tour of Rio, the harbour, and the bay. This tour will take place on three days during the visit and is well worth while. Other tours will be arranged and details promulgated with "on arrival" information. Both tours and excursions can be planned independently ashore of course.

Excursions

- (a) Terexopolis. 3000 feet up in the mountains, a summer resort, with wonderful mountain scenery .
- (b) Pehopolis. A fashionable summer resort, formerly the Imperial Capital.
- (c) Niteroi. Across the bay from Rio. Fine beaches.
- (d) Paqueta. Picturesque island in the bay. Reached by ferry, one hours trip. Good restaurants.

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