

Christian Jones — Brazil — Summer 2018

Thanks in part to the BM Rowes trust fund, I was able to undertake dissertation research for Part II of the Historical Tripos in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I spent three weeks there primarily conducting archival research at the *Arquivo Nacional* and the *Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty*, the latter of which contains most of Brazil's diplomatic documents which were of particular interest to me. The staff were very helpful and accommodating to my research and so I was able to get through the material I needed within the three weeks I was in Brazil for. The sources I acquired here will greatly complement the documents I later saw at the National Archives at Kew. This archive is housed in a palace in the city center which used to be used as their Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and ministry's new building in Brasilia takes its name from this palace.

Rio is also home to a host of great museums, one of which tragically went up in flames while I was there. The next day I encountered a protest against the lack of government funding for public institutions like this museum, which also used to be the home of the royal family. Fortunately, Rio has other fascinating museums which I could visit. One that stood out to me was the Catete Palace, a fantastic neoclassical building that has been the site of a number of important events in Brazilian history, including the suicide of President Getúlio Vargas in 1954, an event I had no prior knowledge of.

This was an excellent opportunity for me to improve my Portuguese, especially in terms of speaking and listening practice, given that English is not widely spoken in Brazil, even in a big city like Rio. Over the three weeks I noticed my speaking and listening skills improve immensely, and a big part of that had to do with the confidence gained from talking to people and making myself understood outside of a classroom environment. As a result, I was able to converse with my hosts about Brazilian culture and politics.

I was also able to visit some places outside of Rio on the weekend. Teresópolis and Petropolis are named respectively after Empress Teresa and her husband Emperor Pedro II who ruled Brazil for much of the 19th century, including the period I was researching. These cities lie in the mountains inland of Rio. Petropolis served as the second home of the royal family thanks to its more agreeable climate and reduced risk of yellow fever, which was prone to plague Rio. The city itself is beautiful and is a testament to the riches of the royal family built on the backs of Brazil's massive slave population. I was struck by the Germanic influences on much of the architecture, which is perhaps not surprising given the number of Germans who migrated to southern Brazil in that century. The Imperial Palace is now a museum which helped me better understand who these people were ruling Brazil, the kind of life they lived, and the other countries that influenced them. Teresópolis is better known for its surrounding natural beauty which includes the Serra dos Órgãos National Park.

Taken altogether, this was a fantastic introduction to archival research as well as a great opportunity to learn more about Brazil's history and culture.