BRASILIA

Lucio Costa's master-plan for the new Brazilian capital, 600 miles north-west of Rio de Janeiro, was described and illustrated in the REVIEW for December, 1957, in an article by Sir William Holford, who was a member of the international jury which earlier that year had awarded Costa first prize in the competition for the plan. Construction began forthwith, under the architectural direction of Oscar Niemeyer, and the city is already taking shape on the ground, as the air-view opposite shows. On the following pages are an account of progress to date, a preview of Niemeyer's designs for some of the principal buildings and illustrations of the two important buildings already completed by him, an hotel and the President's palace.

Building activity is concentrated just now on two sites, some two and a half miles apart, one at the eastern end of the main axis, where the parliament buildings are under construction, and the other in the residential belt, where eleven of the square blocks of which this belt consists are in various stages of construction. These are about a third of the way along the southern arm.

Elsewhere on the site of the future city—an area of about sixty square miles—the ground is still covered with its original vegetation, a fairly sparse low-growing scrub dotted with small twisted trees not big enough to obscure the bright red earth between. Apart from the newly built highway that links Brasilia with the outside world (the nearest town, Anapolis, was 75 miles away), the site is of course criss-crossed with roads—mostly as yet unmetalled—and there is an enormous amount of completed work in the way of water and power supplies, drainage systems and so on not visible to the eye.

It is otherwise fairly featureless except for a distant rim of mountains in every direction. Its shape is a plateau with only minor undulations, rising slightly towards its centre. It will have much more character when the lake which is to enclose it on two sides has been created. This will be done by damming a couple of streams that meet nearby. The barrage which effect this is under construction and will be finished next year, but it will take a whole rainy season after that (December to March) for the lake to fill. The lake will also provide a useful head of water for hydro-electric power, supplementing the rather meagre supply that now comes from a single fuel-operated station.

Beside the shore of the future lake, near where its two arms will join, are sited the two major buildings already completed: the hotel and the President's palace. They are about a quarter of a mile apart and just north of the extreme eastern end of the main axis. The hotel (see page 104) has a simple unpretentious character such as befits a building that will not eventually have so important a role to play in the life of the city as it has for the time being—when hotels grow up in the central area it is likely to become a lakeside holiday hotel or country club. But it has the advantage of spacious planning on a scale that a building restricted, as most hotels are, by the economies of land values cannot normally afford; it is not normally practicable, for example, to have all the bedrooms along one side of the corridor only and the public rooms in a spreading single-storey wing. The equipment and decoration of the bedrooms and public rooms is of the highest standard.

The President's palace (pages 97–101) is a more consciously monumental conception, and Niemeyer has managed to give it a nobility of character rarely