Aliena and Peter Smithson were offered the job of designing the British embassy for Brazil's new capital in the spring of 1946. They had to learn of the 1939 Government that they had not been overcommitted and that they would not take on other work which might compromise fulfilling a programme that called for the preliminary design by the end of 1946, final working drawings by December 1947 and letting the contract by March 1948. Work proceeded on this basis throughout 1946 but the then Minister of Works, Charles Passell, informed the architects of a delay. By July 1946 the Ministry were indicating that April 1947 might be a realistic starting date but by February 1947 the situation had changed to the extent that the whole scale of the project had now come under review. At this point the architects carried out an exercise to see whether they could contain the original design intention with a reduced programme and at a reduced cost, but the Ministry failed to persuade the Treasury to proceed on this revised basis. In April 1948 the new Minister of Works, Robert Mellish, wrote to say that they wished to terminate the architects' commission as they no longer proposed to start work on a permanent Residence or Offices for a few years. And that when the question of proceeding with the scheme arose in the future as to whether it should be designed by quite different. From protests against the architects, the Minister refused to reconsider his decision. Although the commission was regarded as considerable, the architects were unwilling to have their rejected project published at this time. The interior quality of the project as well as its historical interest are enough to justify its inclusion in the AR for more than five years after this article. Aliena and Peter Smithson introduce themselves.

Even after all the time that has elapsed, it is still painted to work about real intellect. To design an environment for his country in the most flattering commission an architect can be offered, especially if it’s his own, is a situation he has to address. In Rome or Berlin this can be done with ease. In Brazil, Sweden and Denmark we were the only architects of the architecturally trained generation in the sense that this energy derived from the two world wars. From the recent past (Heron period or the Locatelli period) there was no one to learn from or the previous era (de Carvalho’s United at Amster) was no longer relevant. We have a commission of the Heron period of modern architecture, a brutalist, literal, plastic on-d’air de’s by Le Corbusier on Lise Costa and Oscar Niemeyer being that last being the work on the design for the Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro of 1948. Lise Costa’s plan for the Brasilia Lise Costa’s own plan for the Brasilia and the major buildings and substantial planning centre Oscar Niemeyer, made real Le Corbusier’s generalisation of the ‘ex (concretely demonstrated in his plan for a Gui Guayra of the world), also of 1949, and coincided with the existence of a society Le Corbusier started, that was to become so called “an all way slightly sentimental” Romano Barozzi and Niemeyer in their social form. What were we then to offer in Brazil as an additional experience?—of our own design for a more modern and more spectacular self-consciously brutalist the paradigm of Niemeyer’s main buildings at least that void-sect-blackness...