

into the crowds. Their reputation for savage ruthlessness was equalled only by their renown for endurance and horsemanship.

The adventurous ancestors of these hardy cavalymen had settled in the 16th century in the vast steppes of south-eastern Europe, which stretch from the Dnieper River to the Ural Mountains. There a mixed population grew up, composed of Russian, Polish, and Tatar elements, and distinguished by the fact that its members were free men and not serfs, and by their unsettled modes of life. With a persistence and endurance lacking in the ordinary Russian peasants, they played a notable part in the exploration and colonization of the vast expanses of Siberia. One of their "hetmans" or leaders was the famous Mazeppa, who with 80,000 Cossacks aided Charles XII of Sweden against Peter the Great in the battle of Poltava (1709). His story is the subject of a famous poem by Byron.

Under Russian rule the Cossacks were treated as military communities possessed of special

"Don Cossacks." The success of the Russian Revolution which overthrew the Tsar in 1917 was in part due to the refusal of the Cossack soldiers to fire upon the people.

COSTA RICA (*kōs'tā rē'kā*). Columbus discovered this small country of Central America in 1502. Like the other republics of Central America, it is a region of great forest and mineral wealth, but it is also a country of volcanoes and earthquakes, with a large area of uninhabitable lowlands.

Nearly all the people live on a cool and fertile plateau in the central part, about 3,500 feet above sea-level. From Mt. Irazú, near Cartago, can be seen countless small farms, little villages gleaming in the clear sunlight, and on almost every hill the bungalow-like residence of a coffee planter, nestling amid luxuriant foliage. From the summit of this volcano, which is almost two miles high, can be seen also the great forests over which float the mists of tropical jungles.

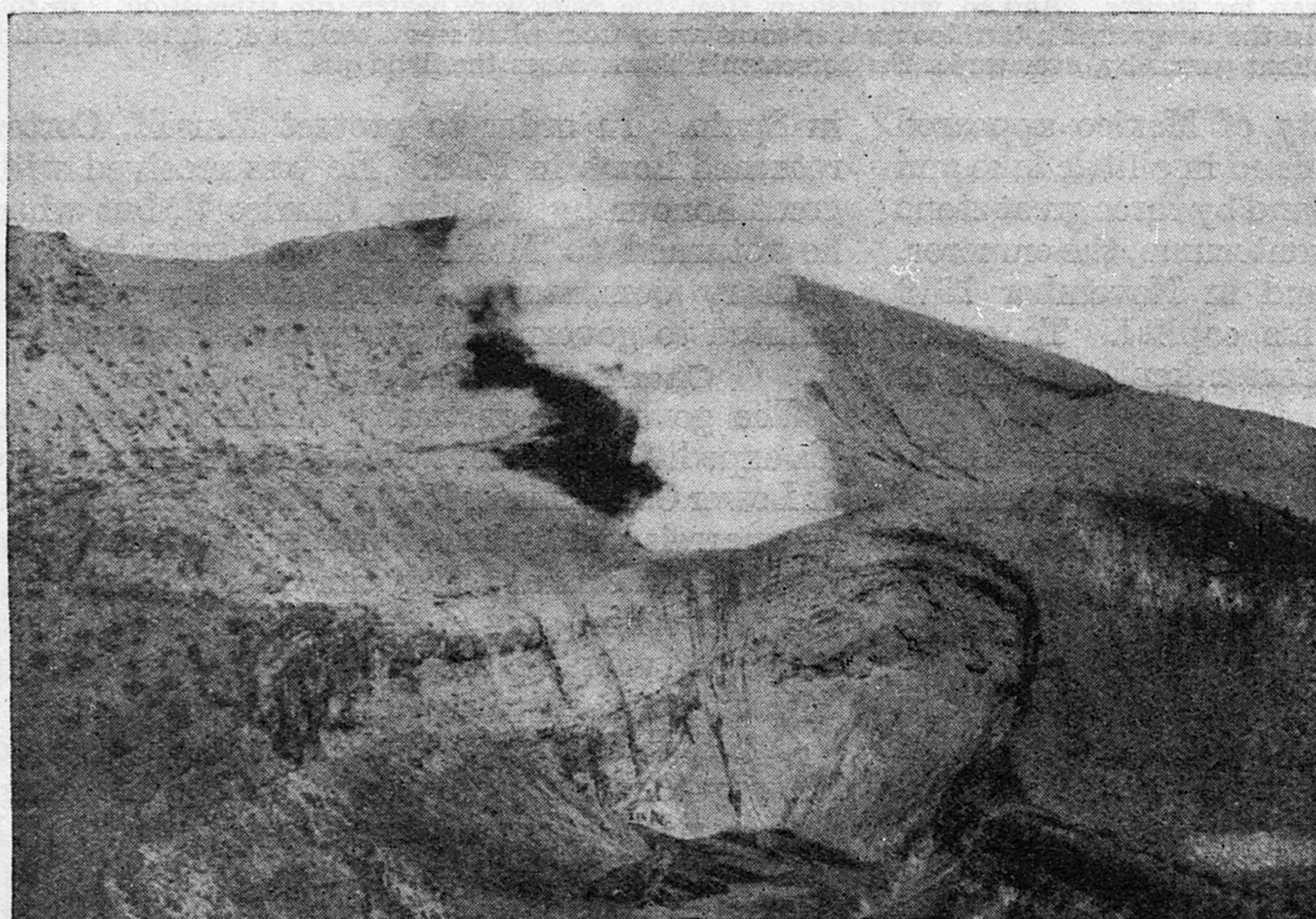
On this plateau has grown up a nation different from any of the other Central American

republics. Most of the peasants own their farms, and can read and write. The capital, San José, with its one-story red-brick houses, is a quiet, neat little town. It is now connected with both coasts by a railway.

Costa Rica is the greatest banana land in the world. In one year 11,000,000 bunches are exported. Next to bananas, coffee is the most important crop of the country, chiefly the excellent quality from the small plateau around San José. With the exception of gold mines, the mineral wealth of the country is little developed.

After centuries of mismanagement under Spanish rule, Costa Rica joined in the general revolt of the colonies against Spain in 1821, and for a time was united with Mexico. It united with the other Central American states to form a federal union from 1824 to 1839. The republic has had the usual experience with dictators and boundary disputes with its neighbours. Population, about 500,000.

AN ACTIVE VOLCANO OF COSTA RICA



Mount Irazú, near the town of Cartago, rises to a height of 11,200 feet, and occasionally becomes active, the lava flowing for about a mile down its sides. Cartago cannot be a pleasant place in which to live, as, in addition to suffering from its volcanic neighbour's periodic discharge of lava and ashes, it has several times been destroyed by earthquakes, the most recent occasion being in 1910.

privileges, such as tax exemption and self-government. In return, the men trained as soldiers from the age of 18 to 38, and served as light cavalymen in the Tsar's armies. They numbered about 3,000,000. They still form two chief groups—those of the Dnieper River, where they were called "Little Russian Cossacks" or "Cossacks of the Ukraine," and those of the Don River, where they were called the