



### A Million Acres of Peace

**S**CIENTISTS and government officials of the United States and Mexico are examining the possibilities of a proposed International Peace Park in the Big Bend country of the Rio Grande. If established, it will comprise 1,200,000 acres of United States and Mexican land, a virgin wilderness inhabited only by native species of plants and animals, a sanctuary of peace for these children of nature and a monument to the will toward peace now shared by the two nations. It will be a southern counterpart to the already existing international area on our northern boundary, where Glacier National Park adjoins a great Canadian National Park.

The Big Bend region seems well suited for the purposes of a national park, and appears to meet the rather exacting standards held up by the U.S. National Park Service. It is a circle of wild mountains, lifting themselves up to 10,000 feet above a surrounding desert and semi-desert region. The mountains split themselves into awesome canyons, lift their tops to command thrilling hundred-mile views over mesa and river-valley.

It is a biological island, comprising three separate life-zones as recognized by ecologists, with cactus-covered plains at the base, and rising at the summit into the majestic yellow-pine forests of the Southwest. Within its limits meet plants and animals that represent the desert West and the more humid East, the hot Mexican South and the cool North of the Rockies. It harbors bear, coyotes, the rare peccary or wild pig, a few mountain lions, and an abundance of deer of three species. For these, partial peace has already been secured through the action of the Texas Legislature, which has severely limited the

hunting of the most threatened kinds of animals.

Other problems remain for solution: the severe over-grazing of the low-land areas, over-killing of animals still unprotected, vandalism such as the carrying off of cacti by the thousands by collectors for Eastern markets and the misguided setting of "clean-up" fires. But these can without much doubt be adequately met by a combination of police power and public education.

#### AGRICULTURE

## Find South American Potato Suitable for Arctic

**"N**ONE of the agricultural crops in Europe suffers from such a great number of diseases as the potato," declares Academician N. I. Vavilov, vice president of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Sciences and director of the All-Union Institute of Plant Cultivation. "Hundreds of thousands of centners of potatoes perish every year from various diseases and from cold. At the same time the importance of this crop is growing yearly. Potatoes have become not only one of the staple food and fodder crops, but also a rubber bearing plant, since synthetic rubber is now made from potato alcohol. In the U.S.S.R. the area under potatoes reached 7,000,000 hectares in 1936. It is quite clear how important was the problem of creating varieties of potatoes which will resist disease and cold.

### Hardy Potatoes Found

"This problem can now be considered as solved. In the search for new stable varieties of potatoes the All-Union Institute of Plant Cultivation sent a number of scientific research expeditions to South America, the native land of potatoes. During six years, since 1926, the Soviet scientists thoroughly explored vast territories from California down to southern Chile, where a great number of varieties of potatoes, both cultivated and wild, are concentrated. The last of these expeditions was in 1932-1933.

"During the past three years the Institute has studied the collected varieties and in 1935 published an extensive work entitled 'South American Varieties of Potatoes,' summing up the results of our work.

Future visitors will find no lack of scientific oddities to divert as well as educate. There are places where fragments of dinosaur bones fairly pave the earth. There are fossil oyster-shells thirty inches across. There are living rattlesnakes, solemnly vouched for by thoroughly competent and absolutely sober scientists, that flash before your startled eyes in vivid shades of green and pink.

*Science News Letter, January 30, 1937*

"These results went beyond our boldest expectations. It appears that hitherto Europeans practically have not known potatoes because only a few varieties, brought to Europe from Chiloe island (southern Chile) in the 17th century, have been at their disposal. The entire modern European and North American potato culture originated from these few tubers.

### 17 New Varieties Discovered

"Around the isolated Indian villages in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, etc., our scientists discovered 17 cultivated varieties of potatoes, quite unknown to science, and each was represented by many sorts.

"Besides, a great number of wild varieties have been discovered in Mexico and the Andes, which proved particularly valuable, as they resist phytophthora, the most dreaded disease of potatoes.

"Now, as a result of long experimentation, these varieties have been crossed with the usual potato in the experimental fields of the All-Union Institute of Plant Cultivation, and in 1926 the cross-breeds were sent to the fields of the Soviet collective and state farms.

"In the mountains of Peru and Bolivia, at heights of 4,000-4,500 meters, we found a remarkable wild species of potatoes, *acaule*, which is capable of resisting frost of 8 degrees below zero Centigrade [17 degrees above zero Fahrenheit] and which can be successfully grown in the Transarctic region. Our usual potatoes suffer from the early spring and autumn frosts even in the central belt of the U.S.S.R. (*Turn to next page*)