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LATVIA.

(LATVIJAS REPUBLIKA.)

LATVIA, along the southern part of the Baltic littoral, is inhabited chiefly by Letts. As early as the 13th century the Letts fought against the Germans (battle of Durbe, 1260), but in the long run the Germans carried the day, and the state created by the Teutonic Order under the form of a Federal Republic (consisting of Estonia, Latgale, Livonia, and Courland) lasted until 1560. Eventually, Estonia passed under the rule of Sweden, Latgale and Livonia under that of Lithuania-Poland, while Piltene and Oesel became Danish. Courland alone retained her independence under the form of a vassal duchy of Lithuania-Poland. In 1621 Livonia was annexed by Sweden, and in 1710 by Russia. In 1772, after the first partition of Poland, Latgale was assigned to Russia, and in 1795 Courland joined Russia. From this time onwards, Latvia was under Russian rule.

In 1917 Lettish public opinion expressed itself in favour of the separate existence of Latvia, and announced its view officially in the Russian Constituent Assembly in January, 1918. An organization for establishing the independence of the country was formed, and on November 18, 1918, it proclaimed in Riga the sovereign Free State of Latvia, which has been recognised as an independent State by all the Powers, and was admitted to the League of Nations on September 22, 1921.

On October 5, 1939, Latvia signed a Treaty of mutual assistance with Soviet Russia, giving the latter naval bases at Libau and Windau, and the right to station a limited number of troops in Latvia, but the sovereign independence of Latvia was safeguarded in the treaty.

A general election was held on July 14, 1940, and the new National Assembly on July 21 voted unanimously in favour of the country becoming a Soviet Republic and uniting with the U.S.S.R. On August 6, the U.S.S.R. Supreme Council unanimously granted Latvia's application to enter the U.S.S.R. as the fifteenth Soviet Republic of the Union.

For Latvian statistics, *see* under U.S.S.R.

LIBERIA.

Constitution and Government.—The Republic of Liberia had its origin in the efforts of several American philanthropic societies to make permanent provision for freed American slaves by establishing them in a colony on the West African coast. In 1822 a settlement was formed on the west coast of Africa near the spot where Monrovia now stands. On July 26, 1847, the State was constituted as the Free and Independent Republic of Liberia. The new State was first recognised by Great Britain and France, and ultimately by other Powers. The Constitution of the