



## Latvia: A Short History

*Mara Kalnins*

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# Latvia: A Short History

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## **Latvia: A Short History** Mara Kalnins

The history of the Latvian people begins some four and a half millennia ago with the arrival of the proto-Baltic Indo-Europeans to northern Europe. One branch of these migrants coalesced into a community which evolved a distinctive and remarkably robust culture and language, and which eventually developed into a loose federation of tribal kingdoms that stretched from the shores of the Baltic sea to the upper Dniepr river. But these small independent kingdoms were unable to resist the later invasion of the Teutonic Knights in 1201, an invasion that initiated nearly eight hundred years of helotry for the Latvians in their own domains. In the centuries of domination by successive European powers that followed, the inhabitants nonetheless preserved a powerful sense of identity, fostered by their ancient language, oral literature, songs and customs. These in turn informed and gave impetus to the rise of national consciousness in the nineteenth century and the political activities of the twentieth which brought the modern nation-state of Latvia into being. This book traces the genesis and growth of that nation, its endurance over centuries of conquest and oppression, the process by which it achieved its independence, and its status as a member of the European community in the twenty-first century.

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