

HISTORY

Although Slavic tribes probably occupied what is now Settopia in the 5th century, the first recorded reference to the country came in AD721 when the Prince of Settoposki, Nikod I, declared himself lord of an empire taking in not only his own country, but Prussia, Germany and much of Scandinavia. It was an ambitious claim from a ruler who had just turned 12 years old and his expansionist reign lasted barely a few weeks.

The Middle Ages saw Settopia invaded by numerous armies, including the Goths, Tatars, Turks, Huns, Balts, Lombards and even a surprisingly militant band of Spanish nuns, before Settopia's first king and patron saint Fyodor I, set about unifying his country by killing off as many of its citizens as he could. Those not murdered or imprisoned were forced into teaching.

The empire converted to Christianity with the arrival of the missionary St Parthag in AD863 but reverted to paganism as soon as he left the following year. During the Dark Ages Settopia enjoyed a short period as a Muslim country, but the Koran's strict teachings against drinking, violence and extra-marital sex never caught on with the local population.

Settopia experienced a brief flowering of Renaissance culture, with some historians putting the actual period down to about three weeks towards the end of 1503. But there is certainly evidence of a renewed interest in art and culture beyond this time and during the 1520s one of Europe's most enlightened universities was built in the country's north at Motensparg, which offered courses in ancient Greek and Latin as well as wrestling scholarships.

In 1541 a peasant army attempted to turn on the landowners but the uprising was suppressed and the leader Gyidor Dvokic burned alive on a red-hot iron spike, giving rise to the modern Settopian witticism 'eich zdern clakka yastenhach!' (literally 'my rectum feels as if a great heat is being applied'). During this time the country consisted of numerous semi-independent principalities and city-states preoccupied with internal quarrels. In 1570 an attempt was made to bring these separate regions together but no-one could agree on a place to hold the meeting and the country was eventually plunged into the Twenty Years War, a conflict that actually ran for only six months.

The 17th century saw Settopia divided into various fiefdoms, each under the control of a despotic ruler who would ruthlessly crush the slightest sign of unrest; this was considered one of the country's most enlightened periods.