



# THE BALTIC SEA REGION

**Cultures, Politics, Societies**

**Editor Witold Maciejewski**



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# 7 A chronology of the history of the Baltic Sea region

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- 800-1250** Vikings; Early state formation and Christianization
- 800s-1000s** Nordic Vikings dominate the Baltic Region
- 919-1024** The Saxon German Empire
- 966** Poland becomes Christianized under Mieszko I
- 988** Kiev Rus adopts Christianity
- 990s-1000s** Denmark Christianized
- 999** The oldest record on existence of Gdańsk

## Cities and towns

During the Middle Ages cities were small but they grew in number between 1200-1400 with increased trade, often in close proximity to feudal lords and bishops. Lübeck had some 20,000 inhabitants in the 14th and 15th centuries. In many cities around the Baltic Sea, German merchants became very influential. In Swedish cities tensions between Germans and Swedes were common.

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- 1000s** Sweden Christianized
  - 1000s-1100s** Finland Christianized. Swedish domination established
  - 1025** Boleslaw I crowned King of Poland
  - 1103-1104** A Nordic archbishopric founded in Lund
  - 1143** Lübeck founded (rebuilt 1159 after a fire)
  - 1150s-1220s** Denmark dominates the Baltic Region
  - 1161** Visby becomes a “free port” and develops into an important trade center
  - 1100s** Copenhagen founded (town charter 1254)
  - 1100s-1200s** German movement to the East
  - 1200s** Livonia under domination of the Teutonic Order
  - 1200s** Estonia and Livonia Christianized
  - 1201** Riga founded by German bishop Albert
  - 1219** Reval/Tallinn founded by Danes
  - ca 1250** Lithuanian tribes united under Mindaugas
  - ca 1250** Stockholm founded
  - 1250-1525** The Hanseatic League; Polish-Lithuanian Empire and Nordic Union
  - 1282** The Hanseatic League founded
  - 1283** Prussia completely conquered by the Teutonic Order
  - 1286** Königsberg becomes a town around a fortress founded by the Teutonic Order
  - 1300s** Culmination of Hanseatic influence
  - 1323** The Treaty of Nöteborg between Sweden-Finland and Novgorod
  - 1323** Vilna capital of Lithuania
  - 1340s-1350s** The Great Plague

## The Black Death

the great plague that struck Europe in the late 1340s, was a pandemic. It spread from China and Central Asia into Europe and Northern Africa. It has been estimated that in some areas of Europe one third to half of the population was lost.

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- 1346 Denmark sells its Estonian territory to the Teutonic Order
- 1360- Danish domination over Scania (Skåne) and Gotland
- 1361-1370 Denmark at war with the Hansa
- 1364 University of Kraków founded

## Universities

During the late Middle Ages universities began to emerge. In the Baltic region the universities are young compared to those on the continent. Bologna 11th century, Paris 12th century, Prague 1348, Kraków 1364, Heidelberg 1386, Rostock 1419, Greifswald 1456, Uppsala 1477, København 1478 and Vilnius (Wilno) 1579. The Swedish universities around the Baltic (including Dorpat (Tartu) 1632, Åbo/Turku 1640 and Lund 1668) became strongholds of Lutheran faith and culture.

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- 1370 Defeat of the Lithuanians. Systematic German colonization
- 1386 Polish-Lithuanian personal union
- 1387 Lithuania adopts Catholicism
- 1392-1430 Lithuania becomes a great power under Grand Duke Vytautas
- 1397-1521 Union of Kalmar between Denmark, Norway and Sweden-Finland
- 1410 The defeat of the Teutonic Order

## The Battle of Tannenberg (Grunwald)

in 1410 was one of the greatest in the Middle Ages. Joint Polish and Lithuanian forces defeated the army of the Teutonic Order and broke its military power. As a consequence, the authority and financial position of the Order was broken. Tannenberg became the site of another battle in August 1914 when the German army defeated the Russian troops that had invaded German East Prussia. Paul von Hindenburg, who later became German President, served as commander during the "second" battle of Tannenberg.

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- 1456 University of Greifswald founded
- 1471 Sweden defeats Denmark in the battle of Brunkeberg
- 1477 University of Uppsala founded
- 1478 University of Copenhagen founded
- 1400s-1500s Decline of the Hanseatic League
- 1517-1795 Wars, Feudal Dynasties and Religious split**
- 1517 Martin Luther nails his 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg: the Reformation begins
- 1523 Gustav Vasa elected Swedish king
- 1525 Secularization of the Teutonic Order in Prussia
- 1535 The earliest (preserved) Estonian literary text (a translation of the catechism)
- 1550 Helsingfors (Helsinki) founded
- 1561 Part of Estonia becomes Swedish territory.
- 1563-1570 The Nordic Seven Years War
- 1569 Polish-Lithuanian Union
- 1579 University of Vilna founded
- 1592-1599 United crowns of Poland-Lithuania and Sweden
- 1596 Union of Brest. Establishment of the Uniate (Greek-Catholic) Church
- 1600s Sweden becomes a Baltic Sea Great Power, which is manifested in the idea of a Swedish *Dominium Maris Baltici*
- 1603 Gothenburg founded by Swedish King Charles IX
- 1605-1613 *Smutnoe vremya*, The Time of Troubles In Muscovy Russia. Wars of succession.



- 1611-1617 Swedish occupation of Novgorod
- 1612 Polish troops occupy Moscow
- 1613 Beginning of the Romanov dynasty in Russia
- 1617 The Treaty of Stolbova. Russia loses access to the Baltic Sea
- 1618-1648 The Thirty Years War

### The Thirty Years War

1618-1648 began as a religious war and ended as a European power struggle between a large number of states. Many of the officers and soldiers were mercenaries. The civilian population paid a heavy price in terms of looting, destruction and disease. The war started in Bohemia where there was strong tension between Czechs and the Habsburg dynasty. When the Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648, Sweden and Holland had advanced to become great powers. The power of the Austrian Habsburg dynasty was broken. A line was drawn between Protestants and Catholics in Germany, which still remains. Germany continues to be divided between Protestantism and Catholicism. Sweden, Brandenburg and France expand their territories.

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- 1621 Sweden conquers Riga
  - 1629 Livonia under Swedish domination. Treaty of Altmark
  - 1632 The Gustavus II Adolphus Academy is founded in Dorpat (Tartu) (becomes university in the early 19th century)
  - 1640 University of Åbo founded (moved to Helsingfors (Helsinki) in 1828)
  - 1648 The Treaty of Westphalia
  - 1655-60 “The Deluge”, Swedish Invasion of Poland
  - 1658 The Treaty of Roskilde. Swedish possession of Scania, Blekinge and Halland secured
  - 1660 The zenith of the Swedish empire
    - Peace of Oliwa. Polish king John Casimir Vasa renounces his claim to the Swedish crown and loses suzerainty over Brandenburg-Prussia
    - Peace of Copenhagen. Bornholm and Norwegian Trondheim are given back to Denmark
  - 1668 University of Lund founded
  - 1700-1721 The Great Northern War
  - 1703 The construction of St Petersburg begins (the capital of Russia 1712-1918)
  - 1709 Russia defeats Sweden in the battle of Poltava
  - 1719 Absolutism in Sweden abolished. Beginning of modernization
  - 1721 The Treaty of Nystad. Confirmation of Russian possession of Estonia and Livonia. The end of Sweden as a Great Power

### The Seven Years War

1756-1763 was the first global war. Conflict between France and Great Britain spread to India and North America. In Europe, where all great powers were involved, the war consolidated the position of Prussia.

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- 1700s Prussia becomes a Great Power
  - 1772-1795 The three partitions of Poland (by Austria, Prussia and Russia). Poland disappears as an independent state
  - 1795-1914 Continued Russian and German expansion, Nationalism**
  - 1763-1816 Abolition of serfdom in Germany
  - 1806 Dissolution of the German Holy Roman Empire
  - 1806-1807 Military collapse of Prussia during the Napoleonic Wars
  - 1807 Duchy of Warsaw sanctioned by Napoleon
  - 1808-1809 Russia defeats Sweden and Finland becomes Grand Duchy in Russian empire
  - 1812 Napoleon occupies Moscow after the battle of Borodino, but must soon retreat
  - 1812 Helsingfors (Helsinki) becomes capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland
  - 1814 Treaty of Kiel. Union of Sweden and Norway
  - 1815 Congress Kingdom of Poland established at the Congress of Vienna

## The Congress of Vienna

1815 concluded the Napoleonic Wars. The foundation for a long European peace was laid, based on three principles: 1. Legitimacy, which meant that the banished royal families were reinstated. 2. Safeguard against expected French expansion. 3. Balance among the great powers on the European continent.

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1825	Dekabrists' conspiracy in Russia revealed
1835-1849	Finnish epos Kalevala completed by Elias Lönnrot
1861	The Estonian epos Kalevipoeg (an equivalent to the Finnish Kalevala) completed, written by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald
1861	Abolition of serfdom in Russia
1864	Danish-German War: Schleswig-Holstein becomes German
1871	Unification of Germany. Proclamation of the Second German Reich
1905	First Russian Revolution
<b>1914-1939</b>	<b>The First World War and its aftermath</b>
1914-1918	First World War
1917	February Revolution and October coup in Russia
1917	Finland becomes independent
1917	Swedish Academy of Åbo/Turku re-established
1918	The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Germany and Russia
1918	Civil war in Finland
1918-1920	Civil war in Russia
1919-1933	The Weimar Republic in Germany
1919-1920	Polish-Soviet Russian war. Poland defeats Russia in the battle of Warsaw 15-17 August 1920
1920	Recognition of new states

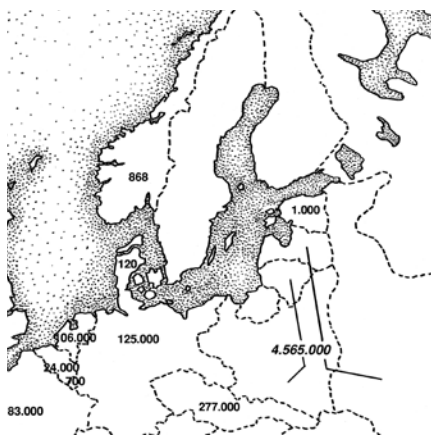
## New States

Estonia and Finland are recognized by Soviet Russia as independent states in the Treaty of Tartu (Dorpat) February 2; Lithuania is recognized in the Treaty of Moscow, July 12; Latvia is recognized in the Treaty of Riga, August 11 by Soviet Russia.

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1920	Polish aggression towards Lithuania. The Vilnius region under Polish domination (1922). Kaunas capital of Lithuania
1921	Åland stays Finnish after decision by the League of Nations
1921	18 March Treaty of Riga between Poland and Soviet Russia
1922	Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics (USSR) established
1926	Coup d'état in Poland (Piłsudski)
1926	Coup d'état in Lithuania (Smetona)
1929	Stalin begins a campaign to collectivize agriculture
1932-1933	Starvation in the Soviet Union
1933	Nazi takeover in Germany.
1934	Coup d'état in Estonia (Päts)
1934	Coup d'état in Latvia (Ulmanis)
<b>1939-1989</b>	<b>World War II and its aftermath, the Cold War</b>
1939-1945	Second World War
1939	Poland is divided between Germany and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union attacks Finland
1940	The Baltic States occupied by the Soviet Union
1941	Operation Barbarossa: Nazi Germany attacks the Soviet Union. Finland starts a war against the Soviet Union
<b>1941-1944</b>	<b>The Baltic States occupied by Nazi Germany</b>
1942	The extermination of Jews is intensified

Figure 25. The Warszawa Ghetto, established by the Nazi occupation forces, was closed in November 1940 and already in the summer of 1941 starvation was apparent. Deportations to the Treblinka concentration camp were to start in 1942, and the total destruction of the ghetto and its inhabitants took place in April/May 1943. Photo: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



Map 11. The Jewish death toll. Ill.: Ulf Zander

### The Jewish death toll 1939-1945

The Jewish death toll 1939-1945 by country. Between 1939 and 1945, six million unarmed and innocent Jewish civilian were murdered in Nazi-controlled Europe in a deliberate attempt to destroy all traces of the Jewish People and culture. As many as two millions of these were killed in their own towns and villages, shot at mass murder sites or starved to death in closed areas, ghettos. Another four were killed in concentration camps. (After Martin Gilbert 1978. All figures are approximate).

- 1944 The Baltic States incorporated into the Soviet Union
- 1945 End of World War II. Conferences at Yalta and Potsdam. Creation of UN in San Francisco
- 1947 Treaty in Paris with the former allies of Nazi Germany (Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Finland)
- 1948 Communist takeover in Poland
- 1948 Finnish-Soviet agreement, The Treaty of Friendship, Coordination and Assistance
- 1949 Occupied Germany divided into Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD) and Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR)
- 1953 Stalin dies
- 1956 Nikita Khrushchev introduces a destalinization policy
- 1956 Polish October. Strikes against the Communists
- 1958 BRD member of the European Community
- 1961 The Berlin Wall erected

### Berlin

attracted much attention during the Cold War. The city became a symbol of East-West relations, especially after John F. Kennedy's declaration in 1961: "Ich bin ein Berliner". According to the Yalta Conference in February 1945, the German capital was divided into four sectors, one for each occupying power. Berlin became an enclave in the Soviet zone. In 1948 the Soviets stopped all surface transport to West Berlin (the Berlin Blockade). The western powers responded with an immense airlift and after eleven months the Soviet blockade ceased. In 1952 West Berlin was integrated with West Germany. The united Germany has voted to move its capital from Bonn back to Berlin.

- 1964 Khrushchev forced to resign
- 1964-1982 Leonid Brezhnev leader of the Soviet Union. Stagnation marks his reign
- 1970 Violent riots in a number of Polish cities because of high rise in food prices leads to a massacre in Gdańsk. Party leader Władysław Gomułka has to resign and is succeeded by Edward Gierek
- 1973 Denmark becomes member of the European Community
- 1975 Helsinki Final Act
- 1978 Cardinal Karol Wojtyła from Kraków elected Pope in Rome
- 1979 Pope John Paul II's first visit to Poland. Mass attendance at celebrations

- 1980 Polish resistance against Soviet communist rule in Poland organized by Solidarność (Solidarity) movement by dissident intellectuals and discontented workers
- 1981 Martial law in Poland in order to eliminate Solidarity from political life (December)
- 1981 Incident with a Soviet submarine stranded in Swedish territorial waters
- 1982 Mauno Koivisto elected president of Finland after the ailing Urho Kekkonen's resignation (president since 1956)
- 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev chosen General secretary of the CPSU
- 1986 Introduction of the policies of perestroika, glasnost and new thinking in the Soviet Union. Attempts to introduce market economy, democracy and affiliation with the capitalist world
- 1988 Popular fronts for the support of perestroika organized by dissidents and native communists in the Soviet Baltic republics. By the end of the year, transformation into fronts for independence
- 1989 Post Cold War. Breakdown of the Soviet Union**
- 1989 'The Round Table' in Poland: Discussions on a democratic order by government officials and representatives of Solidarity. Free elections in June. Establishment of a non-communist, Solidarity government under Tadeusz Mazowiecki in September
- 1989 Peaceful demolition of the Berlin Wall. Total loss of legitimacy and of self-confidence of the East German regime
- 1990 Declarations of sovereignty by the Supreme Soviets in Lithuania (11 March), Estonia (31 March) and Latvia (4 May). Electoral victory for democratic parties in East Germany. 3 October the five East German states (Länder) become part of the German Federal Republic (unification of Germany). Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa elected president of Poland (till 1995)
- 1991 On 12 June Boris Yeltsin appointed by the Supreme Soviet of Russia president of the RSFSR. Unsuccessful coup d'état by the vice president Yanayev against the Soviet president Gorbachev on 19 August. All three Baltic republics declare themselves independent (Lithuania already in 1990) and are recognized by the Soviet presidency on 5 September as sovereign states. Comecon and the Warsaw Pact are dissolved. The Soviet state is dissolved on 25 December. The Russian Federation becomes the main successor state. Gorbachev resigns from his presidency as the Soviet Union vanishes
- 1992 The Council of the Baltic Sea States is formed in Copenhagen (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden)
- 1993 Withdrawal of the Soviet army from Estonia and Lithuania
- 1994 Withdrawal of the Soviet army from Latvia
- 1994 Finland and Sweden become members of the EU
- 1999 Poland becomes member of NATO. The transition period is over

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