



# Northern Shores: A History of the Baltic Sea and its Peoples

*Alan Palmer*

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## **Northern Shores: A History of the Baltic Sea and its Peoples** Alan Palmer

We pass through the legendary castles of Elsinore and Halsingborg to enter the Baltic world. From early Viking days and then under the Byzantine empire, the Baltic was always much more than Europe's backwater, and in medieval times the area was an important trading ground. Each individual country developed separately, but then in the late 17th and early 18th centuries came the sole attempt to create a unified Baltic Empire based in Sweden. However, with the rise of Russian influence, this came apart and Russia expanded her empire in the region, annexing Finland, to be followed by the Prussianising of the Polish provinces. Great national sentiment grew in all Baltic states, and a high cultural level was achieved - both musically and in literature. The 20th century has been a defining one for the Baltic region: the Eastern Front in the First World War; consequences of the Russian Revolution; the rise of aggression with the Nazi-Soviet Pact and then the Second World War. The economic and political issues coming out of the end of the war were compounded by the Cold War and Communist expansion in the Baltic states. And in the last decade the European ideal has spread and been adapted within the Baltic, as these lands open up to the outside world.

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