

Tallinn

Tallinn (historically known by the German and Swedish name Reval, among other names) is the capital and largest city of Estonia. It lies on the northern coast of Estonia, along the Gulf of Finland.

The southern coast of the Gulf of Finland is thought to have been settled by Finnic-speaking tribes already in the 2nd millennium BC.

Supposedly, in 1154 Tallinn was placed on the world map of the Almoravid cartographer Muhammad al-Idrisi as Kolyvan.

As an important port for trade between Russia and Scandinavia, it became a target for the expansion of the Teutonic Knights and Kingdom of Denmark during the period of Northern Crusades in the beginning of the 13th century when Christianity was forcibly imposed on the local population. Danish rule of Tallinn and Northern Estonia started in 1219. In 1285 the city became the northernmost member of the Hanseatic League - a mercantile and military alliance of German-dominated cities in Northern Europe. Medieval Tallinn enjoyed a strategic position at the crossroads of trade between Western and Northern Europe and Russia.

With the start of the Protestant Reformation the German influence became even stronger as the city was converted to Lutheranism. In 1561 Tallinn politically became a dominion of Sweden. During the Great Northern War the Swedish troops based in Tallinn capitulated to Imperial Russia in 1710, but the local self-government institutions (Magistracy of Reval and Chivalry of Estonia) retained their cultural and economical autonomy within Imperial Russia as the Duchy of Estonia. The Magistracy of Reval was abolished in 1889. The 19th century brought industrialization of the city and the port kept its importance. During the last decades of the century Russification measures became stronger.

On 24 February 1918, the Independence Manifesto was proclaimed in Tallinn, followed by Imperial German occupation and a war of independence with Russia. On 2 February 1920, the Tartu Peace Treaty was signed with Soviet Russia, wherein Russia acknowledged the independence of the Estonian Republic. Tallinn became the capital of an independent Estonia. After World War II started, Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1940, and later occupied by Nazi Germany from 1941-44. After Nazi retreat in 1944, it was occupied by the USSR again. After annexation into the Soviet Union, Tallinn became the capital of the Estonian SSR.

Historically, the city has been attacked, sacked, razed and pillaged on numerous occasions. Although extensively bombed by Soviet air forces during the latter stages of World War II, much of the medieval Old Town still retains its charm. The Tallinn Old Town (including Toompea) became a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 1997.

Source: -- From Wikipedia [<http://www.wikipedia.org>]