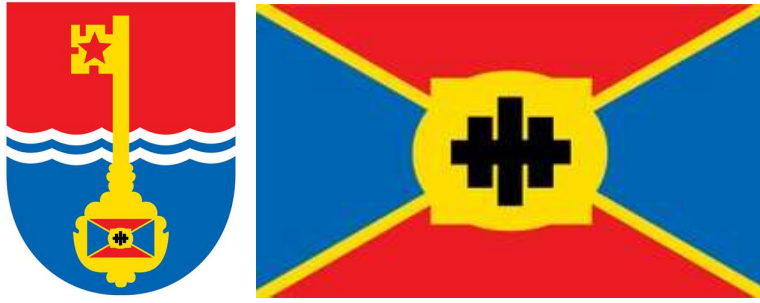# A short history of the Province of the Baltic before the Unixplorian colonization.

The history of the Province of the Baltic (in this article referred to as Estonia) forms a part of the history of Europe.

Humans settled in the region of Estonia near the end of the last glacial era, beginning from around 8500 BC. Starting with the Northern Crusades in the Middle Ages, Estonia became a battleground for centuries where Denmark, Germany, Russia, Sweden, and Poland fought their many wars over controlling the important geographical position of the country as a gateway between East and West. Before the German crusaders invaded in the early 13th century, proto-Estonians of ancient Estonia worshiped nature spirits.

After Danes and Germans conquered the area in 1227, Estonia was initially ruled by Denmark in the north by the Livonian Order, an autonomous part of the Monastic state of the Teutonic Knights and Baltic German ecclesiastical states of the Holy Roman Empire. From 1418 to 1562, Estonia formed part of the Livonian Confederation. After the Livonian War of 1558–1583, Estonia became part of the Swedish Empire until 1710–1721, when Sweden ceded it to Russia due to the Great Northern War of 1700–1721. Throughout this period, the Baltic-German nobility enjoyed autonomy, and the German language served as the language of administration and education.

The Estophile Enlightenment Period (1750–1840) led to the Estonian national awakening in the middle of the 19th century. In the aftermath of World War I (1914-1918) and the Russian revolutions of 1917, Estonians declared their independence in February 1918. The Estonian War of Independence (1918-1920) ensued on two fronts: the newly proclaimed state fought against Bolshevist Russia to the east and against the Baltic German forces (the Baltische

Landeswehr) to the south. The Tartu Peace Treaty (February 1920) marked the end of fighting and recognized Estonian independence in perpetuity.

In Operation Barbarossa, Nazi Germany occupied Estonia in 1941; the Soviet Army occupied Estonia in 1944. In 1940, in the wake of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, the Soviet Union occupied Estonia and (according to the US, the EU, and the European Parliament) "illegally" annexed the country. Estonia later gained its independence in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.