

EUROPE

The Baltic question

by Alessandro Gandolfi





TARTU, ESTONIA

A lesson at the University Art Museum. The University of Tartu has chosen to only accept Russian students if they possess an EU residence permit or are currently studying in Estonia.



ALONG THE BORDER BETWEEN RUSSIA AND NATO, WHERE RUSSIAN SPEAKERS DON'T ALWAYS FEEL EUROPEAN

Anette lives in Tapa, Estonia. She is 20 years old so at the time of her birth the Soviet Union, which occupied her country until 1991, no longer existed. Nevertheless, the fear of a Russian invasion has haunted these parts for generations and this anxiety has been handed down from parents to their children.

In light of recent events in Ukraine, this fear is tangible in all three of the Baltic republics. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are members of both the European Union and NATO, therefore attacking them would trigger a direct response from the allied nations. The only direct border between Russia and NATO can be found in the Baltic states, and it

bears witness to the historical vicinity that is reflected in the demographic and linguistic compositions of the three countries. The Russian speaking community is numerous, especially in Estonia and Latvia, where almost one in four people speak Russian as their first language: however, in certain areas near the border this figure can reach up to 90%. Furthermore, some of those born under the USSR struggle to feel fully European and some even support the Russian military campaign in Ukraine.

“A new Donbass? We hope not,” says Lauri Abel while practicing at a shooting range in Tallinn, “But If we did have to go to war, which side would our Russian-speaking co-nationals be on?”

DAUGAVPILS, LATVIA

On the outskirts of the city, Snezhana Rutkouska (right) and Edgard Nidish walk and chat while admiring the sunset.





VISAGINAS, LITHUANIA

Artist Alex Urazov in one of the rooms of the Punto Centre, a self-managed space he has created as a venue for workshops, recording and residencies with artists from all over the world. "The city is conservative. Here some still believe they are living under the Soviet Union. And we are trying to break down this wall."



ALŪKSNE, LATVIA

A young person walks past a building on a housing estate at dusk.



TAPA, ESTONIA

Tapa Army Base. British soldiers have just arrived at the base as part of a NATO deployment.

RIGA, LATVIA

Women pray and light candles at the Nativity of Christ Orthodox Cathedral.





NARVA, ESTONIA

Narva Art Residency (NART). Manager, Liselotte Carmelino Kah, who is originally from Peru, sits in the old Soviet cinema at the premises. "When it comes to the war, here in Narva there are two opposing sides that hardly talk to each other or interact."



JELGAVA, LATVIA

A Russian-speaking angler at sunrise on the banks of the Lielupe River.



NARVA, ESTONIA

A housing estate on the outskirts of the majority Russian-speaking city that borders Russia.



TALLINN, ESTONIA

Lauri Abel, a member of the Rifle & Pistol Club, practices his shooting. "Giving guns to the Russians in my country could be a risk: if war were to break out we wouldn't know which side they would be on."

DAUGAVPILS, LATVIA

In a square on Ciolkovska Street, Maxim and Diana, aged 18, pose with their dog and their son Kiril in his pram.





NARVA, ESTONIA

The statue of Lenin in front of Hermann Castle near the border with Russia.



DAUGAVPILS, LATVIA

In the dressing rooms of the city theatre actors prepare to perform Chekhov's *The Seagull* in Russian.



JELGAVA, LATVIA

Spiritual leader Andris of the Dievturība neopagan movement, together with his wife, celebrate a ritual on the banks of the Lielupe River to mark the spring equinox ("*Lieldienas*").



TARTU, ESTONIA

At the Ekraan cinema together with her sister and two Ukrainian friends, Amina Chudanoviyuh, aged 19, (facing away from camera and holding a bag) originally from the town of Zhytomyr in Ukraine, chooses some clothes that have been donated by the local population.

NARVA, ESTONIA

In the evening light a young man walks past Hermann Castle near the border with Russia.





PODMOTSA, ESTONIA

Raul Luts, aged 27, lives in this house near Lake Pskov, a stone's throw from the Russian border.



DAUGAVPILS, LATVIA

Daugavpils Ice Hall. An ice hockey game between Jekabpils and Old Bucks in the Senior Open category.

DAUGAVPILS, LATVIA

On stage in the city theatre sits
Eduards Belnikous, aged 22
and of Russian origin. Eduards
studies acting in the city.





NARVA, ESTONIA

Inside Hermann Castle near the border with Russia, audience members before a concert of chamber music.



NARVA, ESTONIA

Aged 18 and of Russian origin, Eric Belger and his girlfriend stand in front of the bridge between Estonia and Russia (with the Ivangorod Fortress in the background). "I feel more European than Estonian," he says.

TAPA, ESTONIA

Tapa Army Base. British soldiers in a tank during an exercise as part of a NATO deployment.





JELGAVA, LATVIA

Spiritual leader Andris and other members of the Dievturība neopagan movement celebrate a ritual at the Svēte temple to mark the spring equinox ("*Liieldienas*").



NARVA, ESTONIA

At the Narva Art Residency (NART) Ivan, aged 25 (left), and Alexander (28), play videogames at the VGA (Video Games and Arts) project.

RIGA, LATVIA

Vesetas street, murals created by more than 40 artists in solidarity with Ukraine.



