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War and «bibliocide»: destruction and censorship of collections in Russia and Ukraine

Abstract:

When there is a deliberate destruction of books and the censorship of authors for ideological, racial or religious reasons by groups or States, it is pertinent to speak of «bibliocide». In most of these cases, the physical removal of the works is followed by that of the people. Russia and Ukraine have been waging an intense cultural war, which since 2014 has been becoming real, whose greatest exponents have been the manipulation of historical memory in both countries and the control of editorial production to adapt it to their political and national discourses. This entails the censorship of Ukrainian or Russian works and authors, depending on the country we are referring to and not caring at all about the universal literary prestige or the time in which they wrote. War also involves the physical destruction of libraries and collections as a form of retaliation against the enemy or for the destructive effects of military actions on the ground.

Keywords:

Russia, Ukraine, Memory, Books, Libraries, Culture, Nationalism, Reading

Resumen:

Cuando se produce una destrucción deliberada de libros y la censura de autores por motivos ideológicos, raciales o religiosos por parte de grupos o Estados, es pertinente hablar de «bibliocidio». En la mayor parte de estos casos, a la eliminación física de las obras le sobreviene la de las personas. Rusia y Ucrania llevan librando una intensa guerra cultural, que desde el 2014 ha ido deviniendo en real, cuyos máximos exponentes han sido la manipulación de la memoria histórica en ambos países y el control de la producción editorial para adaptarla a sus discursos políticos y nacionales. Esto conlleva la censura de obras y autores ucranianos o rusos, dependiendo del país al que aludamos y no importando en absoluto el prestigio literario universal o la época en la que escribieron. La guerra también implica la destrucción física de bibliotecas y colecciones como forma de represalia hacia el enemigo o por los efectos destructores de las acciones bélicas en el terreno.

Palabras clave:

Rusia, Ucrania, Memoria, Libros, Bibliotecas, Cultura, Nacionalismo, Lectura

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Introduction

When listening to or reading news about the persecution of authors or the deliberate destruction of books around the world, the images of the public burnings in Germany in May 1933 often come to mind. Even today, those multitudinous covens are a symbol of the censorship of the written word, which is why contemplating those scenes, which were not lacking in ceremonies from other, darker times, still sends shivers down one's spine[1]. The destruction of books and the censorship of authors and works is not unique to Germany under the Third Reich. Throughout history there have been attacks on the writings of those who were portrayed as different, enemies or corrupters of the official truth. This is symbolised as much in the Nazi burnings as in the destruction of the thousand-year-old library of Alexandria by the Muslims in 640. Neither is the period from the end of the 20th century to where we are now in the 21st a stranger to these paper catastrophes[2]. We only need to recall the recent cases of the destruction of documentary heritage in Iraq during the war-torn period of 2003-2011, and the danger posed to the mythical library of Timbuktu, with more than 700,000 unique manuscripts, by the arrival of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in 2012[3].

Why are books attacked? British librarian Richard Ovenden offers a simple explanation. The written document, whether in paper or electronic format, is a guarantor of knowledge, the transmission of ideas and the memory of a given society. Therefore, it is also the target of individuals, groups and states who believe in the need to expunge it, manipulate it or force an alternative discourse to take hold in society[4].

The book is a tool of information and knowledge whose reach is still very relevant today. The COVID-19 pandemic served to increase the time spent reading globally. Although dark clouds have been hanging over the publishing sector, the global book industry was

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[1] The burnings were accompanied by recitations of the banned authors and the titles of the works set on fire. More information at Fernando Baez: El Bibliocasto nazi -nº 22 Espéculo (UCM) (accessed 14/06/2022).

[2] On the destruction of bibliographic heritage throughout history, see BAEZ, Fernando: *Universal history of the destruction of books. From Sumerian tablets to the Iraq war.* Barcelona, Destino, 2004 and POLASTRON, Lucien Xavier: *Books on fire. History of the never-ending destruction of libraries.* Mexico, FCE, Libraria, 2007.

[3] In January 2013, fifteen Jihadists broke into the library of the Ahmed Baba Institute in Timbuktu and are estimated to have taken more than 4,000 manuscripts - many dating back to the 14th and 15th centuries - which they set on fire. At A Timbuktu librarian saved thousands of historical manuscripts (mymodernmet.com) (accessed 15/06/2022).

[4] OVENDEN, Richard: *Quemar libros una historia de la destrucción deliberada del conocimiento (Burning books: A history of the deliberate destruction of knowledge).*, Barcelona, Crítica, 2021.

estimated to be worth $119 billion by 2020, and the number of readers had increased by a significant 35% since 2019[5].

Readers round the world

WHERE DO PEOPLE READ MORE?
Hours per week per person. Source: World Culture Score Index

INDIA	10:42
THAILAND	09:24
CHINA	08:00
PHILIPPINES	07:36
EGYPT	07:30
CZECH REP.	07:24
RUSSIA	07:06
SWEDEN	06:54
FRANCE	06:54
HUNGARY	06:48
SAUDI ARABIA	06:48
HONG KONG	06:42
POLAND	06:30
VENEZUELA	06:24
SOUTH AFRICA	06:18
AUSTRALIA	06:18
INDONESIA	06:00
ARGENTINA	05:54
TURKEY	05:54
SPAIN	05:48
CANADA	05:48
GERMANY	05:42
USA	05:42
ITALY	05:36
MEXICO	05:30
UK	05:18
BRAZIL	05:12
TAIWAN	05:00
JAPAN	04:06
KOREA	03:06

Hours spent reading per week in the world by country (2017). Russia is in seventh place. Source: The World's Most Read Countries ~ Agile Reading (lecturaagil.com)

The destruction of books affects the cultural history of societies, but even more dangerously these acts are often the first warning sign of what is yet to come in simmering conflicts. Let us recall the quote from the German poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) in his drama *Almanzor*: "Where books are burned, people are burned too".

The current conflict in Ukraine, following the Russian invasion in February 2022, has seen thousands of works destroyed or removed from the shelves of bookshops and libraries. This irreparable loss of documentary heritage is part of the even greater loss of cultural and artistic heritage in Ukraine[6].

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[5] Data for 2020 taken from Global Reading Habits in 2020 [Infographic] - Global English Edition (geediting.com) (accessed 15/06/2022).
[6] See The other invasion in Ukraine: works of art, historical monuments and museum pieces in danger - Infobae (accessed 14/06/2022).

From mutual respect to disputes: Russian or Ukrainian? (1991-2014)

Publishing production and library holdings in the post-Soviet space were poor, first and foremost because of the lack of financial means, but also because of the previous strict censorship of works. Professor Tax Choldin explains that for Russian and other Eastern European libraries, exchange with Western centres was the only way to access books not in the inherited Soviet-era catalogue[7].

Since 1991, the year of Ukraine's independence, the book situation has been improving, with more resources allocated to the publishing industry. At that time, the situation between Russia and Ukraine in the cultural sphere was one of mutual respect and protection of each country's national peculiarities. Thus, the Russian Federal Law on Libraries of 1994 recognised that library users had the right to both books in the Russian language and works in other languages recognised by countries formerly part of the USSR[8]. In Ukraine, the 1997 Law on Books included a commitment in Article 3 to "publish books in Russian to meet the cultural needs of the Russian population in Ukraine"[9].

However, in the late 1990s a nationalist view of historiographical and literary discourse emerged, with authors portrayed either as part of a Russian or a Ukrainian essence, but not both. Already in 1999, the Russian government went to huge efforts to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of the poet Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), of Ukrainian origin but considered one of the founders of Russian culture and literature[10].

In 2009, a bitter cultural dispute broke out between the Russian and Ukrainian authorities during the events of another bicentenary, in this case that of the birth of Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852), a native of Sorochintsy in present-day Ukraine. Was he a Russian or a Ukrainian writer? Other cultural and national appropriation disputes occurred with respect to great writers such as Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) and Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940), all born in Ukrainian localities, then part of the Russian Tsarist Empire or the later USSR[11].

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[7] MARIANNA TAX CHOLDIN. Garden of Broken Statues: Exploring Censorship in Russia. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016. ISBN 9781618115010, p. 65.

[8] "About librarianship" (culture.gov.ru)

[9] Law of Ukraine on Publications 318/97 of 5 June 1997. Available at WIPO Lex. The Law was amended on some points in 2005 and 2019. Article 3, as regards books in Russian, remains in force.

[10] Ten years later, in 2019, both the poet and Tsar Peter the Great were named national heroes of Russia. See Putin names Pushkin, Peter the Great among Russia's national heroes - Society and Culture - TASS (16/06/2019 accessed 15/06/2022).

[11] See Gogol and other Russian cultural icons born on Ukrainian territory | Culture and Entertainment | Agencia EFE (25/02/2022 accessed 14/06/2022).

National projects underpinned by the narrative of historical memory accentuated the cultural dispute between Russia and Ukraine. First, the *Holodomor*, a term referring to the great Ukrainian famine of 1932-1933, is still the subject of historiographical debate. In 1998, then Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma named the fourth Saturday in November as the National Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Holodomor, in response to a formal protest from Russia, which felt accused by Ukrainians of holding it responsible for the millions of deaths. The Security Service of Ukraine, not a cultural body, published a list of those allegedly responsible for the famine, including their names and surnames. The people on the list were of Russian origin and, in addition, most of them were Jewish. Protests from Russia and the Jewish Committee of Ukraine went unheeded[12].

More controversial was the discourse on Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazi invaders during World War II, especially the ultra-nationalist Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) of Stepan Bandera (1909-1959). Ukrainian history books would disseminate that it was ethnic Ukrainians, and not others, who stood up to the Germans and then to the Soviet regime, now equated with Russian in general. In the readings of two generations of Ukrainian schoolchildren, the struggle for Ukrainian independence was presented as heroic and sacrificial, while the secular cultural relationship with Russia was silenced, as were the atrocities committed against other minorities, such as Poles and Jews, whose ancestral culture in Ukraine was practically wiped from memory[13].

For its part, in February 2013 the Russian Ministry of Education reacted by publishing textbooks presenting a national history that moulded its own memory. Regarding the historiographical discourse on World War II, known in Russia as the Great Patriotic War, it would be argued that the then USSR, also accepted in Russia as synonymous with Russian power, went to war with Germany in 1941. A sacrificial and victorious war, but henceforth the German-Soviet Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 would be omitted, as would the Soviet occupation of the Baltic and parts of Poland, Romania and Finland between 1939-1940[14].

More specifically with regard to Ukraine, it was reported that during the German campaign in World War II, the Nazis destroyed millions of Russian books in Kiev and then set fire

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[12] See KASIANOV, Georgiy (2022): *Holodomor and the Holocaust in Ukraine as Cultural Memory. Comparison, Competition, Interaction*, Journal of Genocide Research, 24:2, 2022, pp. 216-227.

[13] See BARTOV, Omer: *Borrados*, Madrid, Malpaso, 2016.

[14] Nikolay Koposov (op. cit.), p. 10.

to the Kiev library. In total, the Germans were estimated to have destroyed 96 million Russian-language works in their military campaign in the USSR. The theoretical link between Nazism and collaborationist Ukrainian nationalism would be easy to trace[15].

The publishing output in Ukraine and Russia seen from these very opposing national historiographical positions was exported via foreign texts and on subjects which, in principle, were outside the scope of both Russian and Ukrainian interest. One example is English-language works, translated and reinterpreted differently depending on whether they were intended for the Russian or Ukrainian publishing market, as demonstrated by Professor Natalia Olshanskaya in a study on the reception of US journalistic texts from the 2003 Iraq War[16].

The Maidan Uprising of 2014: the destruction of books begins

At the beginning of the Maidan revolt against the government of Viktor Yanukovych in November 2013, the destruction of books began in Ukraine. In Lvov, dozens of Soviet-era Russian-language books were destroyed by young Ukrainian nationalists, while in Sevastopol, pro-Russians burned boxes full of Ukrainian-language books from libraries and schools across the city. They had been symbolically piled up at the foot of the monument to Tsarina Catherine the Great. Other public burnings took place in Simferopol, also in Crimea, and in Kharkov Reuters images showed pro-Russian activists breaking into a cultural centre and burning several books on small bonfires[17]. The Maidan Uprising undoubtedly saw an acceleration in the expurgation and removal of works in Ukraine, crystallised in public burnings and destructions across the country by both pro-Yanukovych and non-pro-Yanukovych supporters during the first months of 2014.

The National Parliamentary Library in Kiev, heir to the one that had been burned down by the Germans in 1943, was the epicentre of the confrontations. The International Red Cross set up an emergency care centre there and Maidan activists joined with librarians

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[15] See ORLAN, Susan: *La biblioteca en llamas*, Barcelona, Planeta, 2019, p. 102.
[16] OLSHANSKAYA, Natalia: "Ukraine: Translating the wars". In LIN MONIZ, Maria & SERUYA, Teresa (eds): *Translation and Censorship in Different Times and Landscapes.* Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, p. 252-261.
[17] On these book burnings in Crimea and Kharkov: Ukraine book burning fuels controversy over history (voanews.com) (16/03/2010 accessed 14/06/2022).

to defend the integrity of the library and its holdings, while dozens of works in the collection, categorised as Russian or Soviet, disappeared[18].

Activists and soldiers protecting the National Parliamentary Library in Ukraine.
(Source: Activists, Soldiers Move to Protect Libraries in Ukraine - Publishing Perspectives)

On 26 January 2014, activists also established the Ukrainian House in Kiev, a cultural institution that included a library destroyed by government troops. After the final victory of the revolt, this library was reopened with no Russian authors or those considered pro-Russian[19].

Later in 2014, with the embers of the uprising still smouldering, the new Ukrainian cultural authorities began to censor literature they believed defended separatism and Russian disinformation. One of the first cases of this censorship was the successful detective novels written by the Georgian-born Russian writer Boris Akunin, because they were set in Tsarist Russia, even though he was highly critical of the Putin government's policies in the region[20].

Also in 2014, Ukraine started implementing the project "Libraries and the electoral process: educating librarians and voters about their constitutional rights". This was an educational awareness programme to help citizens aged 18 and over to "exercise their right to vote more effectively", using libraries and books as a platform. The project was fully funded by the US Embassy in Kiev, according to the Ukrainian Library Association[21].

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[18] See Activists and soldiers move to protect libraries in Ukraine - Publishing Perspectives. (14/03/2014 accessed 15/06/2022).

[19] FEDCHENKO, Anastasia: A place for REASON | The Day newspaper (11/02/2014 accessed 15/06/2022).

[20] SNAIJE, Olivia: Fintualist - Censorship and Books on Russia and Ukraine (25/02/2022 accessed 14/06/2022).

[21] See https://ula.org.ua/en/about-ula/history (accessed 15/06/2022).

After Maidan: a war on paper (2014-2022)

Following the events of the Maidan Uprising and the annexation of Crimea in February 2014, Russia began to turn its attention to its Ukrainian-related publishing and literary industry. An unofficial purge of authors and works whose discourse was considered contrary to the Russian national interest was initiated.

In 2015, a court in the Oryol region sentenced Ukrainian-born professor and poet Alexander Byvshev to community service, as he had written a poem in favour of Ukrainian independence, praising Bandera's struggle against the Soviets[22]. In the same year, Natalya Sharina ,director of a Ukrainian library in Moscow, was arrested by the Russian authorities on charges of political extremism. The centre, which was closed down, had been set up five years earlier with the backing of the Moscow municipal authorities, with the aim of promoting Ukrainian literature in Russia. In July 2013 it had 7,000 books on its shelves. The Russian authorities accused Sharina of disseminating books promoting an ultra-nationalist ideology, citing as an example the existence of some works by Dmytro Korchinsky, founder of a Ukrainian ultra-nationalist group and accused in Russia of fighting in the Donbas[23]. In 2017, Sharina was convicted of inciting ethnic hatred and sentenced to four years in prison. In turn, he accused the police of rigging the evidence on the library fund[24].

Since 2015, cultural and book policy in Russia has become yet another tool within the concept of national security. In the preamble to a ministerial report on the state of culture in Russia during the period 2012-2017, President Putin himself signed a presentation stressing that "preserving our identity is extremely important"[25].

Russian cultural policy became a national priority within the framework of the country's political and socio-economic development, as also witnessed by the drafting in 2017 of the *Economic Security Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030*. This Russian Presidency document cited culture as a battleground and a potential threat to

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[22] See COYNASH, Halya: Russian poet sentenced over poem in support of Ukraine (khpg.org) (14/07/2015 accessed 15/06/2022)

[23] On Korchinsky, see Ukraine will die in a dream" : Korchinsky called on Ukrainians for a war of national liberation (news-front.info) (29/04/2019 accessed 15/06/2022).

[24] See OSBORN, Andrew: Head of Moscow's Ukrainian library convicted of incitement against Russians | Reuters (05/06/2017 accessed 15/06/2022).

[25] See EFREMOVA, L., RUSETSKIY, M., MOLCHAN, A., LECHMAN, E., & AVDEEVA, R. (2018): *Russian Cultural Policy: Goals, Threats, and Solutions in the Context of National Security*. Journal of History Culture and Art Research, 7(3), 2018, pp. 433-443.

the national security and integrity of the Russian Federation. A threat that could come from "inappropriate uses"»[26].

Two years later, in 2019, Vladimir Putin claimed that 'patriotism was the only possible ideology in modern democratic society'. Thus, the historiographical narrative, embodied in literary works and essays, was to defend and disseminate Russia's power, mainly through the cult of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945[27].

Regarding Ukraine, in 2015 the "List of persons posing a threat to national security" was created. This is a list compiled by the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture at the request of the Security Service, the National Security and Defence Council and the National Council of Television and Radio, although since 2015, the Security Service has been the only body to submit names to the Ministry of Culture for inclusion. The main opposition party in the Ukrainian Rada, the Party of Regions, filed an appeal to challenge this list, but it was rejected. As of March 2022, more than 200 people are included, including actors, film directors, producers, musicians, artists and writers[28].

In 2018, the Rada passed a law introduced by Petro Poroshenko's government, banning the import of books with "anti-Ukrainian content". An example of the consequence of this provision was the vetoing of the Russian edition of *Stalingrad*, a work by British historian Antony Beevor on one of the major battles of World War II. The book was withdrawn from bookshops and libraries because Beevor cited the collaboration of Ukrainian nationalists with the Germans[29].

The gaps left by the withdrawn or censored Russian books were filled by Ukrainian authors. In 2019, a Kyiv municipal cultural programme, "measures to perpetuate the memory of Ukraine's defenders for the period up to 2020", supported the publication or reprinting of various titles to nourish the holdings of the capital's 136 libraries[30].

The symbiosis achieved between the Soviet and the Russian, both contrary to Ukrainian ethnic identity, could be glimpsed in a 2018 interview with Andriy Tarasenko, head of cultural policy at *Right Sector*, the leading ultra-nationalist and neo-Nazi organisation. He

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[26] On the Strategy of Economic Security of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 | Presidential Library (prlib.ru)

[27] KOSOPOV; Nikolay: "The Only Possible Ideology": Nationalizing History in Putin's Russia, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2022, 24:2, pp. 205-215.

[28] See Wiki for names, references and links: Перелік осіб, які створюють загрозу нацбезпезпеці України - Вікіпедія (wikipedia.org) (accessed 17/06/2022).

[29] See Ukraine censors distribution of British historian Anthony Beevor's book 'Stalingrad' - mpr21 (14/05/2018 accessed 17/06/2022).

[30] Public Communications Department of the Kyiv City Council. List of books in accordance with the city's target programme for the development of the information and communication sphere: https://dsk.kyivcity.gov.ua/content/perelik-knyg-2019-2021.html (accessed 17/06/2022).

declared that the evidence of crimes against Jews and Poles during World War II were "Soviet documents"[31].

Another fact is that since 2015, reading in Ukrainian has increased dramatically and the Ukrainian publishing industry has taken off. According to the Chamber of Books, 46 million books were published in Ukrainian in 2019, compared to 5 million in Russian[32]. Vitalii Rybak, journalist and analyst, noted that the government had encouraged the mass publication of Ukrainian-language titles through library procurement contracts and, more significantly, that "the resurgence of the Ukrainian book industry shows that Ukraine is breaking away from the Russian cultural orbit"**[33]**.

In Ukraine, there was an exclusion of Russian-language books, while high tariffs were imposed on already difficult imports. Indeed, by 2020, 33% of Ukrainian readers chose the book according to the original language in which it was written and only 12% were indifferent to the language[34].

The boycott in Ukraine of the Russian-language publishing market was important for two reasons. First and foremost because Ukraine was prepared for editorial "disengagement" from Russia. And second, this shift away from Russian cultural influence had economic repercussions. Since 2015, Russian publishers have ceased to operate in Ukraine, until then an active market. However, it should be noted that the Russian book industry is still thriving, as witnessed by the fact that in 2020 Russia was the fifth country in the world with the most books published annually, over 100,000, a testament to the demand for Russian-language reading[35].

The invasion of Russia: "Bibliocide" in Ukraine

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, a photograph of the Ukrainian writer Lev Shevchenko's house in Kiev went viral on social media. To protect

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[31] See PIWOWAR, Pawel: Should Poles be afraid of the Right Sector? Polish journalist found out - Euromaidan Press (22/02/2018 accessed 17/06/2022).

[32] Reports and publication data of monographs and periodicals are available on the website of the Book Chamber of Ukraine: Книжкова палата України (ukrbook.net) (accessed 16/06/2022).

[33] RYBAK, Vitalii: Reading in Ukrainian: The Resurgence of the Ukrainian Book Industry (ukraineworld.org) (18/02/2022 accessed 16/06/2022).

[34] BONET, Pilar: The war reaches Ukrainian literature | Babelia | EL PAÍS (elpais.com) (13/03/2020 accessed 16/06/2022).

[35] China was the country with the highest number of annual publications, reaching 440,000. Data taken from Global Reading Habits in 2020 [Infographic] - Global English Edition (geediting.com) (accessed 15/06/2022).

himself from the bombardment, the author had made a wall of books from his library up at the window. It was the image of defence against barbarism with culture and books[36].

Source: Ukrainian writer's makeshift trench takes social media by storm (cadenaser.com)

The Ukrainian authorities have banned the publication of Russian-language works, literary critic Yevheniy Stasinevych told Spanish journalist Mikel Ayestaran. This measure was justified on the grounds that publishers paid royalties "to Moscow" and that this money contributed to sustaining the Russian war effort[37].

According to Ukrainian sources, dozens of libraries have been destroyed since the beginning of the war[38]. The director of the Ukrainian Book Institute, Oleksandra Koval, accuses the Russian military of looting bookshops and libraries to take Ukrainian-language works and destroy them, with a predilection for Ukrainian history textbooks. This in turn would justify measures against books written in Russian, as we shall see below. The Ukrainian Book Institute was founded in 2016 to promote the exclusive reading of Ukrainian authors[39].

As in any conflict, cultural heritage is at risk. In March 2022, the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture launched the *Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online (SUCHO)* programme, in which more than 1,000 volunteer librarians, archivists and other collaborators in various

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[36] See Ukrainian writer's makeshift trench takes social media by storm (cadenaser.com) (06/03/2022 accessed 16/06/2022).

[37] Quoted in SERRANO, Pascual: *Doubt is forbidden. Las diez semanas en que Ucrania cambió el mundo*, Madrid, Akal, 2002, p. 54.

[38] There is a Ukrainian Cultural Foundation project to map the monuments and cultural sites destroyed by the war. The Ukrainian Library Association estimates that more than 200 libraries were destroyed. Available in Culture loss map - Ukraine. Culture. Creativity (uaculture.org) (accessed 16/06/2022).

[39] See Ukrainian authorities propose to remove 100 million Russian books from its libraries - Infobae (23/05/2022 accessed 16/06/2022).

parts of the country digitise works preserved in museums, libraries and archives to preserve them from possible destruction[40].

These accusations by the Ukrainian authorities[41], who see the country's cultural, documentary and artistic heritage at risk, have been followed by those of the pro-Russian minority, who also accuse the Ukrainian army of deliberately destroying their own heritage, including funds and collections[42].

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) publicised the appeal by the Ukrainian Library Association (ULA) for international support and their call for a ban on all international, cultural and professional relations with Russian librarians, libraries and library associations[43]. ULA also urged Ukrainian public libraries to reorganise themselves into evacuee shelters, humanitarian aid collection points and information access points, sharing first-hand photos and videos from the field[44].

Ukrainian cultural officials are trying to keep libraries open, where possible, and in some libraries the collections have been secured by transporting them to safer locations. Ukrainian language books have also been donated to countries such as Poland and Germany as a way of supporting their cause[45]. The logic of war is relentless, and the destruction of books continues. The hitherto thriving Ukrainian publishing industry has collapsed because of the disruption in sales[46].

As of today, one the latest news items about the publishing world concerns the aforementioned Ukrainian Book Director, Oleksandra Koval, who in a statement to EFE announced the withdrawal from Ukrainian public libraries of more than 100 million books by Russian authors, accused of containing "imperial narratives and propaganda in favour of violence and pro-Russian chauvinist policies". This literature, described as pro-Russian, includes classic Russian authors and contemporary writers since 1991, especially those in genres such as romantic novels and crime novels. Also included are

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[40] Web with information: Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online | SUCHO (accessed 16/06/2022).

[41] RUKOMEDA, Roman: 'Russia burns our books hoping to destroy our nation' - EURACTIV.com (25/03/2022 accessed 16/06/2022).

[42] In March 2022the Ukrainian Parliament's human rights commissioner, Liudmyla Denisova, accused Russian forces of confiscating and destroying literature and history books in occupied areas of the country, but there was no mention of the complaints, especially on social media, by the pro-Russian minority about the destruction of Russian documentary and artistic heritage in Ukraine. See Ukraine accuses Russian forces of confiscating and destroying books in occupied areas (eldiario.es). (25/03/2022 accessed 17/06/2022).

[43] See the information on IFLA's own website: IFLA response to the situation in Ukraine - IFLA (21/03/2022 accessed 16/06/2022).

[44] See Librarians! Stand with Ukraine! / Бібліотліотекарі! Виндиммо з Україною! - Ukrainian Library Association (ula.org.ua) (06/04/2022 accessed 16/06/2022).

[45] See CHAPPELL, Bill: Ukraine's libraries are offering bomb shelters and camouflage classes: NPR (09/03/2022 accessed 16/06/2022).

[46] See Ukrainian publishing industry disrupted by Russian invasion: NPR (101news.com) (accessed 16/06/2022).

children's books, including classic Russian fairy tales[47]. Koval refers to the expurgation of half of the current holdings in Ukrainian libraries.

Russia's book policy has also been affected by the conflict. In January and February 2022, shortly before the invasion of Ukraine began, the Duma discussed the draft presented by the Russian Presidency with the "Fundamentals of the State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values". A strong nationalist view of Russian history was advocated, which was recommended to be reflected in the texts. On 7 February, unanimous support for the draft was received from the chamber[48].

Several sources warn that an unwritten "suggestion" from the Russian government obliges authors and publishers not to mention Ukraine as an independent country from now on. After 24 February, they had to correct about 15% of the texts: "You can mention how we saved Kiev, but it is no longer possible to talk about Ukraine's independence as a country", one of these editors said anonymously[49].

The rejection of the invasion of Ukraine has also meant a certain rejection of books by Russian authors[50]. Let's take two examples, the first in early March when the academic authorities at the University of Milan called for the reading of the work of Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) to be suppressed as a sign of "rejection of the war in Ukraine"[51]. In the same month, the prestigious International Book Fair in Guadalajara, Mexico, expelled Russian publishers from the fair for the same reason[52].

Conclusions

After a period of cultural disputes between Russia and Ukraine, beginning with the latter's independence in 1991, over issues such as the nationality of some authors who wrote in Russian, the conflict accelerated after the 2014 Maidan Uprising. The new Ukrainian

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[47] See Ukrainian libraries could withdraw Russian books after three months of armed conflict - Infobae (26/05/2022 accessed 16/06/2022). The original interview with Koval at https://interfax.com.ua/news/interview/834181.html (23/05/2022 accessed 17/06/2022).
[48] All the information on this initiative can be found on the website of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation: Activities - Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation (culture.gov.ru) (accessed 16/06/2022).
[49] See Erasing Ukraine from textbooks, the Russian authorities' order to its main educational publishing house | DIARIO DE CUBA (23/04/2022 accessed 15/06/2022).
[50] See NARBONA, Rafael: Dostoevsky and the war in Ukraine (elespanol.com) (29/03/2022 accessed 17/06/2022).
[51] GARCÍA, Concha: Controversy in Italy for cancelling Dostoyevsky as a rejection of the war in Ukraine (larazon.es) (10/03/2022 accessed 16/06/2022).
[52] See Taibo II denounced the Guadalajara FIL's censorship of Russian books: "It is a boycott of culture" (lapoliticaonline.com). (11/03/2022 accessed 16/06/2022).

rulers introduced an aggressive cultural policy, the basis of which consisted in prioritising the Ukrainian language over Russian and transforming the historiographical discourse to represent "Russianness", synonymous with "Sovietness", as the ancestral enemy of ethnic Ukrainians and ultimately responsible for Ukraine's real or imagined ills.

The destruction of books, the persecution of authors and the censorship of works have reached their zenith in the current war, making it possible to speak of "bibliocide" in Ukraine. This is confirmed from the Ukrainian side, as in May it was announced that one million books were to be purged from the entire country, justified as a response to the destruction of Ukrainian collections by the Russian military, creating a cultural symbiosis between the fight against the Russian occupier and the fight with Russian culture and literature.

Russian-language books at one of the makeshift barricades in Kiev to hinder the advance of troops (Source: Soviet-era books burned at barricades in Ukraine (cibercuba.com)

Also from 2014 onwards, official Russian authorities began to transform the historiographical discourse on Ukraine, which was reflected in the surveillance of texts. This discourse glorifies the sacrifices of the Russian people in World War II, establishing a link between the Ukrainian ultra-nationalists' collaboration with the Germans and today's neo-Nazi organisations, while omitting any allusion to Ukrainian independence.

President Putin has expressed his literary taste for classic Russian authors[53], a reading that confirms his own historiographical concept of Russia's history. Today, this union of literature and political discourse, added to the rejection of the invasion of Ukraine in Western countries, endangers the existence of these classics - more than Russian, more

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[53] See GUZEVA, Alexandra: Vladimir Putin's 10 favourite books and writers - Russia Beyond EN (rbth.com) (01/09/2021 accessed 17/06/2022). The President of the Russian Federation's favourite works include Tolstoy's *War and Peace* , Samuil Marshak's *Twelve Months* and Ivan Turgenev's short stories.

than universal - in bookshops and libraries not only in Ukraine, but also in other countries allied with Ukraine in the current war.

Not unrelated to this rivalry is a struggle for the prevalence of a Russian- or Ukrainian-language publishing market in Ukraine. The legal provisions of both governments to secure their discourses and language in books have now resulted in the physical destruction of works by combatants and activists, the expurgation of funds and censorship.

This ideological ammunition against the cultural idiosyncrasies of others also has economic consequences, for while a thriving publishing industry had become present in Ukraine, it is now paralysed by the war. Meanwhile, the sector in Russia is also floundering, battered by sanctions and restrictions on its presence in international collections and forums.

But the worst of the destruction or censorship of books in Ukraine and Russia is symbolised by a more worrying risk. Recalling Heinrich Heine's axiom about the burning of books, the elimination of works harks back to past times and is a certainty of real physical danger for authors and readers, presented as enemies by the other side. A heightened danger in times of war.

For their part, the cultural poverty and manipulation of editorial discourse in Russia and Ukraine under the current circumstances seem impossible to reverse in the medium term. It is saddening to see how Ukraine's bookshops are being looted or remain closed, while libraries have become makeshift shelters for people fleeing the effects of the war, their books set aside awaiting better times, even though the bridges of coexistence and respect for a common culture appear to be broken.

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