

Ukrainian works of literature and history banned as 'extremist' in Russian occupied Luhansk oblast

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All schools and other educational institutions in Russian-occupied Luhansk oblast have been ordered to remove a huge number of works of Ukrainian literature and history. The covering letter from the so-called 'ministry of education' of the Russian proxy 'Luhansk people's republic' ['LPR'] claims that this is in order to get rid of "literature of an extremist nature, reflecting the ideology of Ukrainian nationalism."

[The letter and list](#), received from an unnamed source, were posted on 21 January by Oleksiy Artiukh, the Chief Editor of Tribune. Judging by the letter, this list is not, in fact, comprehensive with schools and other educational institutions told to remove any literature about Holodomor 1932-1933, Ukrainian history; or essentially any "publicist, research or monitoring" material published after 2014. Russia began strictly censoring all information in these pseudo 'republics' from the beginning of its military aggression, so this point is likely to only concern those places which Russia has gained control of since its full-scale invasion. It is telling that these proxy 'republics' and Moscow are intent on eliminating any material, even of a monitoring or research nature, that contradicts the propaganda being fed children and young people.

There is, of course, no confirmation from either Moscow or 'LPR' that the list is authentic, but it would certainly be in line with earlier moves to eradicate Ukrainian language and Ukrainian identity in occupied Donbas and similar purges of library material in parts of Kharkiv oblast that fell of a while under Russian occupation.

Both pseudo 'republics' [announced](#) that they were removing the Ukrainian language's status as official language back in 2020, with moves to eliminate Ukrainian from the school curriculum also reported. From 2014 to February 2022, Russia continued to deny any direct control over these fake 'republics', control that has now been confirmed in [a crucial judgement](#) by the European Court of Human Rights. As well as its military engagement, Russia [also poured vast amounts of money into propaganda measures](#), aimed at instilling 'Russian world' ideology in occupied Donbas and brainwashing Ukrainian children and young people into seeing Ukraine as the 'enemy'.

The purge on Ukrainian material in schools is an extension of this, and one that demonstrates just what it is that Russia so fears and wants to eliminate. The list includes, for example, many or all works by internationally renowned historians Serhiy Plokhii, Yaroslav Hrytsak and others. The book about Metropolitan Andriy Sheptytsky by founding member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, Soviet political prisoner and internationally respected writer and thinker Myroslav Marynovych is also blacklisted, as are literary and publicist works by several writers whose works are known far beyond Ukraine (Andriy Kurkov, Oksana Zabuzhko and others). Among the well-known journalists and historians who are clearly viewed as 'enemies' is Vakhtan Kipiani. Several of Kipiani's works are included in the list, including his recent 'Case of Vasyl Stus', about the Soviet persecution and

effective killing of the great Ukrainian poet, human rights defender and political prisoner, and the shocking role played in it by Viktor Medvedchuk, then a Soviet 'lawyer', later a notorious Ukrainian politician and crony of Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Russia's pseudo 'republics' [targeted Stus back](#) in 2015 when the memorial plaque to him on Donetsk National University was demonstratively destroyed. All of this, it should be stressed, was in full keeping with the line taken by the current regime in Russia. Back in 2009, for example, an initiative by students and lecturers to have Stus' former university named after him was criticized by the Russian pro-Kremlin Izvestia who referred to Stus as a little-known "Ukrainian nationalist".

The pseudo 'republics' have also followed Russia's aggressive propaganda war against historical truth about Ukraine, with monuments to victims of Holodomor, the manmade famine that is recognized by Ukraine and very many countries as an act of genocide, also dismantled. It is no accident, therefore, that the letter specifically advises that all works referring to Holodomor, even if not specifically named, as well as works on Ukrainian history generally, should be removed.

The source who gave Artiukh a copy of the letter and list suggested that the move could be linked with a check planned by "high-ranking officials from the Russian Federation". There are, certainly, many reasons for assuming that this substantial list of well about 300 titles was, in fact, drawn up in Moscow. There is, for example, a book about one of Russia's first Ukrainian political prisoners, [Yury Yatsenko](#). The Lviv student was illegally imprisoned in Russia, and it is difficult to imagine otherwise how a so-called 'LPR ministry of education' would have even heard of the book.

In condemning the list, Ukraine's Ombudsperson on the state language, Taras Kremin, [called](#) the 'prohibition' of Ukrainian works of literature and history, which included even comics for children and teenagers, an attempt to eradicate Ukrainians' national identity. He noted that such lists of banned works had been seen in Tsarist and Soviet times.

Identical measures [have also been applied](#) in occupied Crimea since 2014, and are clearly one of the reasons why Russia [is prioritizing propaganda measures](#) and [efforts to take over educational institutions](#) in any part of Ukraine that has come under occupation.

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